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President:	Mr. Khalilzad	(United States of America)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Lammens
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. Pan Jingyu
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	South Africa	Ms. Lazouras
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Cross
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/364)

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08-39081 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have just received letters from the representatives of Mauritania and San Marino, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers, as I indicated this morning, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Spain, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain welcomes the choice of the topic of women and peace and security for this thematic debate during the United States presidency of the Security Council in the month of June.

I should like to begin by saying that this morning we heard some extremely important statements, including those made by the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the presiding officers of important bodies of the Organization, the United States Secretary of State and, in particular, such individuals as the Ministers from Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as Major General Cammaert, who have very closely experienced this problem in various places, especially Africa.

Spain of course associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Almost eight years after the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), and in spite of greater awareness of the problem we are addressing today and improvements in prevention mechanisms, fully and effectively protecting women in conflict situations continues to be an unfinished task. Violations of the rights of women and girls in those situations continue to increase, despite the legal framework that the international community has put in place and the growing awareness of the severity of the problem. That awareness was reflected in the General Assembly's recent adoption of its resolution 62/134, on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations, of which Spain was a sponsor.

Responding comprehensively to the use of sexual abuse as a weapon of war continues to pose a challenge for the international community. Along with the ad hoc measures adopted in extreme cases in given peacekeeping operations, it is imperative that the United Nations decisively address the question of how to structure and institutionalize an efficient response by the international community to this very serious problem. Among other things, we need to wage a frontal war against the impunity that, in too many conflict situations, is enjoyed by those responsible for committing crimes against civilians, especially women and girls.

International law has appropriate mechanisms at its disposal. Among them, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court categorizes systematic rape as a war crime and a crime against humanity and, in certain circumstances, even an act of genocide. Universal accession to the Rome Statute would be a crucial step towards combating impunity; as is the implementation of the principle of universal justice by States that have incorporated that principle in their legislation, as Spain has.

With regard to my country, and in the broader framework of the policy of equality that my Government has promoted and strongly defends, in November 2007 Spain adopted a national action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) within the context of the objectives of Spain's organic law for effective equality between men and women. In line with resolution 1325 (2000), Spain's action plan reflects the beliefs that peace is inextricably linked to equality between men and women and that women's equal access and full participation in power structures and their complete involvement in efforts to prevent and

resolve conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

In that regard, allow me to briefly refer to some of the measures that the Government of Spain has adopted to respond to the pending challenges. Those measures focus on six basic objectives: promoting the presence of women in peace missions in which Spain participates; mainstreaming the gender perspective in all phases of those missions; specific gender training of personnel participating in missions; full respect for the human rights of women and girls in conflict situations; promoting the principle of equality in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and promoting greater participation by civil society groups in this area.

Spain supports the establishment of special units within peacekeeping missions to specifically cater for women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence. Such units should be composed of specialized personnel and, moreover, should serve as coordination centres for the activities both of the United Nations system and of the donor community as a whole.

With regard to cases where crimes against women and girls have been committed by personnel of United Nations peace missions, the Organization has now begun to provide an integrated response to the problem. In that connection, we welcome the General Assembly's recent adoption of its resolution 62/214, the Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel. The Government of Spain firmly supports the zero-tolerance policy on this matter.

Spain is determined to promote new efforts to implement the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). We are also finalizing an action plan on women and peacebuilding aimed at all actors participating in Spain's system of cooperation for development. The plan, which will not disregard the status of women as specific potential victims of violence, will highlight the particular importance of women as contributors to the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

In a similar vein, the third meeting of African and Spanish women working for a better world — which took place in Niamey last May under the sponsorship of the Governments of Spain and Niger and which included the participation of women leaders and representatives from most African countries, as well as international bodies — adopted a final declaration that, among other things, stated that the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes must be recognized and supported, including through the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The Niamey meeting also called for the establishment of a multi-donor gender and development fund that would be managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Spain will contribute €50 million to that fund.

In conclusion, Spain fully supports the draft resolution before the Council, of which we are a sponsor. We hope that it will be adopted unanimously.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes this opportunity to focus on women and peace and security, and once again reaffirms its strong support for resolution 1325 (2000). New Zealand is committed to seeking ways to enhance and strengthen the implementation of the resolution through our development cooperation programmes, peacekeeping efforts and domestic policies.

Resolution 1325 (2000) remains the internationally accepted blueprint for a multifaceted response to the issues facing women in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. It has played an invaluable part in highlighting the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

New Zealand welcomes increased Security Council attention to the reality of sexual violence during conflict and to the need to end impunity for crimes, including sexual violence. Sadly, sexual violence continues unabated in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. It is a gross violation of women's human rights, which further exacerbates the vulnerability of women and girls in times of conflict. Sexual violence is an attack not only on the dignity of women but also on the peace process: it raises significant barriers to reconciliation and peace. New Zealand attaches great importance to the need to eliminate such violence.

We welcome the advances that have been made in these areas by the United Nations and Member States. We strongly endorse the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on all forms of violence against women. New Zealand has actively supported General

Assembly resolutions on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations.

New Zealand's response to resolution 1325 (2000) is proactive and includes a number of specific steps to encourage implementation both domestically and internationally. Here are four examples of that.

First, New Zealand is committed to encouraging women to undertake assignments on peacekeeping missions. Women from the New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police and our wider society are an integral part of New Zealand's regional, United Nations and other international peacekeeping efforts. This includes women working in high-risk areas, such as Afghanistan, and on operational missions, such as in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, up to 30 per cent of all of our police peacekeeping deployments are female — among the highest rate in the world.

Secondly, the New Zealand Defence Force has worked hard to integrate women at all levels and in all trades of the Force, including combat. Its diversity strategy recognizes the full value of integrating women into the Defence Force and the benefits of having women at more senior levels.

Thirdly, New Zealand attaches priority to promoting women's rights through the delivery of official development assistance. Gender-based violence is a core focus area for New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID). NZAID supports a number of initiatives in the Pacific region aimed at empowering women and mitigating their exposure to violence. For example, New Zealand is currently involved in the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme, a joint initiative of NZAID, the New Zealand Police and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police organization. It seeks to tackle domestic violence and influence social change.

Fourthly, the NZAID conflict and peacebuilding policy identifies women and girls in conflict and post-conflict areas as a priority group for attention and specifically includes the need to provide support for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It highlights the gender impact of conflict and the role of women in peacebuilding.

In conclusion, New Zealand commends you, Mr. President, for the opportunity for this debate on resolution 1325 (2000), but we agree that progress towards achieving its major goals has been slow and uneven. There remains an urgent need to increase political commitment and resources to ensure its systematic implementation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security, an issue of particular interest to the delegation of Bangladesh. Allow me to recall, with a modicum of pride, that Bangladesh was closely associated with the elaboration and adoption of that landmark resolution, resolution 1325 (2000), as a then-member of the Council.

Women and girls are the main victims of conflict situations. The inherent discrimination and inequalities that women suffer, by and large, can be and often are further deepened in post-conflict situations. Also, in peace and conflict resolution processes, women are the ones who are the most deprived. Their voices are not fully listened to, or even heard. The international community has been increasingly forthcoming in its resolve to undertake concerted measures to prevent gender-based violence.

However, eight years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), sexual violence persists in conflict situations and in peace. We need to reflect further on how best we can address the issues of sexual violence, including its root causes. We need to analyse the challenges and how those can be overcome. There is no denying the fact that we need to ensure adequate representation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. The true measure of women's participation in peace negotiations is not through numbers, but through power in decision-making. In the consolidation of peace, although the role of women remains a vital factor, it is often ignored.

The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has recorded some progress. We hope that the remaining shortcomings will be addressed in the updated 2008-2009 action plan. A number of constraints persist. There is an inadequate understanding of the gender dimension in conflict

situations. That leads to gaps in capacity at the institutional and organizational levels to address various provisions of the resolution. Without adequate attention to and understanding of gender relations and inequalities, women will continue to remain excluded from peacebuilding initiatives. As a result of such situations, their needs are not fully understood. We need to further intensify our efforts in incorporating the gender perspective at all levels of peacebuilding. We also need to create expertise to address the issues related to sexual violence. One way to augment capacity is to facilitate women's participation in both formal and informal negotiations in the peace process.

The availability of gender-disaggregated data is particularly important in understanding the situation of women and girls who are victims of war and conflict. A focused examination of issues specifically related to violence against women is also important in the formulation of policy guidelines. That is an exercise that will assist in undertaking preventive measures. The sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned on a regular basis is useful not only in sustaining peace but also in guiding policy measures.

Peacekeeping operations are no longer limited to military activities. They now have broader mandates to assist in elections, monitor human rights and carry out police functions. Multifaceted peacekeeping operations thus have great potential in addressing the security of women. To that effect, we have successfully integrated the gender perspective in some aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations. However, in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts much remains to be done. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh remains vigilant in our focus on the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000).

As one of the largest contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh is ever conscious of our responsibility to incorporate gender dimensions, particularly the essential elements of resolution 1325 (2000). At present, Bangladesh has more than 30 women police personnel deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The percentage of women as peacekeepers and police from Bangladesh are set to increase in coming days.

We recognize that a strong Security Council mechanism is needed to monitor the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Establishing a working group on women and peace and security might be useful and a good option in that regard. It is our belief that integrating the gender perspective across the United Nations system will keep in view geographical, cultural and ethnic factors. Adequate resources should also be mobilized to that effect. The active involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations is a sine qua non. We are of the view that the role of the media in enhancing the integration of women in peace processes is quite significant.

In conclusion, let me underline that ending impunity is a must. However, it is more important — indeed, crucial — to mobilize leadership, secure accountability, pool adequate resources, identify challenges and address root causes in protecting women and girls in wartime, as well as in peacetime.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands): Our thanks go to you, Mr. President, and to Secretary Rice for having organized this important debate and for providing an opportunity for the Netherlands to make some remarks in addition to Slovenia's intervention on behalf of the European Union.

In 2000, resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security was adopted unanimously by the Council; in 2002, the Rome Statute entered into force; in 2005, the Peacebuilding Commission was established; and, most recently, the Secretary-General launched the Campaign to End Violence against Women by 2015. Despite all these developments, little has changed on the ground. Sexual violence against women in conflict continues unabated and is at unacceptable levels. The incidence of rape is on the increase.

For the Netherlands Government, women's empowerment is a top priority. Women's rights are everyone's concern. The Netherlands is therefore taking a firm stand against the horrific violations of women's rights and human dignity that are taking place in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. That is why the Netherlands supports the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Also, last December, the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Interior and 15 civil society organizations agreed on a national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). An increasing number of Member States are elaborating similar action plans. We now need to focus on

implementation. We need to join forces. What should we do?

First, we need to target men. Gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be achieved without the involvement of men. Men need to talk to men, and they have to speak openly to militia leaders, gang leaders and sometimes the generals to be better role models. If we want sexual violence to end, we need to raise awareness among men about the consequences of their actions. In situations of conflict, boys and men are constantly confronted with models of violent masculinity. Discussions should also take place between men and women, with boys and girls, within communities, to start the healing process and break the cycle of sexual violence.

Secondly, acts of sexual violence should not go unpunished. We owe this first and foremost to the numerous victims. But everyone also should know that if they commit such a crime, they will not and cannot escape justice. Justice is imperative to ending impunity. Governments need to take vigorous action. National judicial systems should be strengthened in order to ensure that such criminals are caught, tried and effectively punished. If national systems fail to bring perpetrators to justice, the International Criminal Court comes into play. The Rome Statute clearly defines rape and other forms of sexual violence, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians, as crimes against humanity. Fighting impunity is also one of the key elements of the resolution on all forms of violence against women that the Netherlands and France present in the General Assembly.

Thirdly, acts of violence against women are often committed by soldiers — the very people who are supposed to provide protection. The Netherlands Ministry of Defence invests in promoting gender equality in the armed forces. Gender training is mandatory and is included in the curriculum of the School for Peace Operations. We believe that all peacekeeping troops and police contingents should be given comprehensive gender training before deployment. Moreover, gender awareness training should be mandatory for all persons in leadership positions in conflict and peace building situations, including civil, military and diplomatic representatives. Additionally, the United Nations should make an extra effort to appoint more women to senior leadership positions in peacekeeping missions. The United Nations should also vigorously implement its zero-tolerance policy. Commanders should shoulder on their responsibility and arrest perpetrators. In this respect, I would like to highlight the recent report of Save the Children United Kingdom about widespread sexual abuse of children and women by aid workers, and above all, by United Nations peacekeepers. It is intolerable that persons who should be providing assistance or protection on behalf of the international community take advantage of the situation to sexually abuse women and children.

Finally, women are not just victims. It cannot be repeated often enough that women and women's organizations have to be included in peace and reconciliation processes. They also need to be involved in formulating justice and reparation programmes, including post-rape care.

The Netherlands very much welcomes this open debate and commends the presidency of the United States for its effort to put this heinous crime so prominently on the agenda of the Council. Sexual violence is linked to peace and security. The adoption of a draft resolution co-sponsored by the Netherlands will be an important step in recognizing that link. We look forward to a report of the Secretary-General which initiates a process to ensure follow-up by the Security Council and to improve coordination of United Nations activities on the ground. Finally, we hope that this process will also include the monitoring of actions taken by parties to implement their responsibilities.

We cannot tolerate what is happening to mothers, daughters, wives and grandmothers. Sexual violence in armed conflict has to stop. It is my responsibility, it is your responsibility; it is the responsibility of us all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): At the outset, allow me to thank the President for having convened this important debate and also to thank Secretary of State Rice for presiding over this morning's debate on such a pressing issue. I also thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership during this month of June. My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their statements, and especially the former Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo for sharing insights from his personal experience and helping us to better understand the challenges before us.

Eight years ago, the Council adopted landmark resolution 1325 (2000), which, for the first time, addressed the impact of war on women. Israel continues to support the full implementation of this resolution. While progress has been made in some aspects, much more work needs to be done. One aspect in particular, which is the basis of today's debate, calls on parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and emphasizes the responsibility of States to put an end to impunity.

While sexual violence in armed conflict has occurred throughout history, brutal and systematic rape has become increasingly commonplace in some conflict and post-conflict areas. Moreover, sexual violence as a weapon of war is now perpetuated with almost universal impunity in some conflicts. Such actions not only constitute gross violations of human rights, but they also undermine confidence in peace processes and raise huge barriers to reconciliation.

While the international community has recognized that sexual violence can amount to a war crime, crimes against humanity, or constitutive acts with respect to genocide, numerous challenges remain with respect to ending sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

One particular obstacle is victims' reluctance to come forward. Survivors and victims of sexual and gender-based violence often feel ostracized, as they are forced to assume guilt and shame. This silence not only harms the victims and their families, but also leads to faulty statistics. Sources in the field confirm that, indeed, the number of incidents of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is greatly underreported. Hence victims must be empowered to reclaim their human dignity. States should enforce the rule of law, bring the perpetrators to justice and end the cycle of impunity.

Similarly, a change in societal attitudes and norms regarding sexual violence must be effected, beginning with, as I just mentioned, the bringing of perpetrators to justice. Ending impunity will also encourage victims to come forward to seek justice and rehabilitation. At the same time, we must educate the world's children, at the earliest stages of life, on the rights, dignity and worth of every human being, without regard to their gender.

At the recent Wilton Park conference, recommendations were made that sexual violence be viewed as a security issue and that the international community should identify the circumstances under which sexual violence is a threat to national and international peace and security. In this context, the Council can play a greater role in ensuring that peacekeeping mandates specifically refer to the prevention of sexual violence, that peacekeepers are appropriately trained and informed about sexual violence and that sanctions and other tools are used against perpetrators. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's call for peacekeepers to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Indeed, resolution 1804 (2008) of 13 March 2008, which imposed a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who commit serious violations of international law, including sexual violence against children, is a good example of how the Council can act more effectively. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported more than 32,000 registered cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence in the province of South Kivu, Democratic People's Republic of the Congo, alone.

Lastly, we must consider the effects of sexual violence not only on the victims, but also on the children born of mass rape, sexual slavery and sexual exploitation. The impact of armed conflict on children born of rape and exploitation has economic, health and social implications that must be addressed.

Sexual violence is not an inevitable outcome of conflict. It can be stopped. States, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations and even individuals all have specific roles to play in seeing that an end is put to this detestable practice.

The Council, in particular, can focus on reporting on sexual violence and seek to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. In that context, my delegation welcomes and is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution currently before the Council. For its part, Israel pledges to continue to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000) and to work to promote women's rights in all of its political and development work. Doing so, in concert with

global efforts, will help to build and sustain an international commitment to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I have the honour of delivering the following statement on behalf of all five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden — each of which is sponsoring the draft resolution today.

First of all, allow me to thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for having organized this open debate.

Women are often victims of armed conflict, but they can also play a central role in preventing and resolving violent conflict as actors in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The ongoing high incidence of horrific sexual violence against women and girls in conflicts demands the attention of the international community as a human rights matter and as a question of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law. It is an issue that has a direct bearing on peace and security, and it is therefore very timely and appropriate that the Security Council is addressing the issue once again. Landmark resolution 1325 (2000) continues to require full implementation.

It is clear that the use of rape and sexual violence exacerbates conflicts and also perpetuates them long after active hostilities are over. Such crimes inflict indelible scars on individuals, families and societies, which makes reconciliation and peacebuilding much more difficult. The scars of sexual violence on the psyche of the victims, their families, the children it often results in, and even the perpetrators, are the explosive remnants of war of the mind, erupting unpredictably, doing long-term damage and making reconstruction of a sustainable peace very difficult indeed.

A climate of impunity on sexual violence continues to exist. We must all join forces to end impunity for such crimes. The Security Council should respond urgently to incidents of sexual violence in conflicts and bring measures to bear to ensure that parties to armed conflict understand clearly that they will pay a heavy price for employing or permitting sexual violence. All Member States must do their part in ensuring that individuals suspected of such crimes are brought to justice in accordance with the necessary legislation at the national level. We also call on States to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, whose Statute explicitly states that rape and other forms of sexual violence can be prosecuted as war crimes or crimes against humanity. Amnesties should not extend to crimes of sexual violence.

Clear guidance for peacekeeping missions is also needed on how to make operational the mandate to protect civilians, including women and girls, from sexual violence. That approach calls for strong and specific mandates from the Security Council, as well as sufficient means and more comprehensive reporting by the United Nations system. There is a need to make full use of available expertise, including from human rights mechanisms such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

All Member States should ensure that training of peacekeepers includes training on resolution 1325 (2000). Furthermore, it is vital that peacebuilding and reconstruction plans include comprehensive victim-protection and support mechanisms, such as shelters for the victims and their families and gender units within the police.

A key element in ensuring the protection of women and girls from sexual violence during conflicts and in post-conflict situations is the participation of women in decision-making processes in all areas and at all levels. Whether it involves practical protection measures, such as the gathering of fuel in safety, or more complex issues, such as the reintegration of combatants into society, the input and experiences of women are essential to success and sustainability.

The participation of women is therefore directly relevant to the maintenance of peace and security. In addition to increasing the presence of women on military and police forces, new avenues must be explored on how to deploy more women in peacekeeping missions, including by establishing civilian observer components. Stronger efforts must be made by the United Nations to include women in discussions on the management and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, including in rebuilding societies, security sector reform, transitional justice and post-conflict political and economic processes.

The Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies should also redouble their efforts to recruit women to high-level positions. The United

Nations system as a whole should intensify its efforts to recruit more women at all levels. The same appeal goes out to all States Members of the United Nations. It is our responsibility to ensure that the United Nations has a solid base from which to recruit.

The Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping missions should continue and be strengthened. There must be no impunity for peacekeepers either. Again, wider participation by women in such missions would help. The highly successful Indian women's police corps in Liberia is encouraging in this regard, as is the high percentage of women in the group of Nigerian police that Nordic and African police have jointly trained for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It is also important to provide appropriate and recurrent training to all personnel involved in peacekeeping operations, including on ethical conduct and the zero-tolerance policy.

Regional bodies are becoming increasingly important actors under the mandate of the Security Council in addressing regional issues of peace and security. Such bodies should be closely linked to the discussions and decisions in relation to women, peace and security. The Secretary-General is encouraged to take a leading role in this matter.

The Security Council should seriously consider the establishment of a working group to monitor conflict situations where sexual violence is widely or systematically used as a weapon of war, as is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Such a working group could assist the Council in reacting rapidly to urgent cases and making proposals on appropriate actions, including emergency obstetric and other sexual and reproductive health services and measures to prevent and treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, psychosocial support, as well as early measures to enforce the rule of law and crime victims' access to justice.

We support the proposal made by the United States in its concept paper that Security Council mandates should be strengthened to prevent sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and provide greater protection for women and girls from widespread and systematic attacks by parties to armed conflicts. This should be dealt with systematically both when mandates for ongoing operations come up for renewal and when mandates for new operations are adopted.

We further encourage the Council to follow up on the recommendation by the Secretary-General of developing a monitoring mechanism to improve its contribution to preventing and redressing violence against women in armed conflict.

Finally, all the Nordic countries have completed or are in the final stages of completing national implementation plans for resolution 1325 (2000) and encourage other Member States to do the same, as a matter of urgency. We also suggest that lessons learned from countries that have such a plan be used in supporting other countries in preparing their own plans.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I would like to commend the United States presidency of the Security Council for having initiated this open debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

Let me reiterate my delegation's full appreciation of the concern raised in the concept paper on the endemic nature of sexual violence against women in situations of armed conflict, in particular the use of rape as a weapon of war.

My delegation views violent sexual acts such as rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery, forced marriages and forced prostitution are crimes against humanity. For us, these crimes are as despicable as they are condemnable, and it does not matter whether they are committed in time of peace or in time of war. Such crimes affect not only the victims, but also families and entire communities. They traumatize people and degrade lives, leaving behind stigma, humiliation and social exclusion.

We are equally worried that eight years after the adoption of landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which both serves as an action framework and reinforces other existing mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration, progress towards its implementation has been slow and uneven.

Indeed, the objectives of the resolution, including the need to enhance women's participation in decision-making, integrating gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations, protecting women from gender-based violence and mainstreaming gender into United Nations programme mechanisms, remain largely unfulfilled. The Nigerian delegation therefore welcomes this new milestone resolution, to be adopted later, as a follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000).

However, similar to resolution 1325 (2000), the critical challenge is how to ensure its steady and widespread implementation, particularly in conflict and post-conflict areas.

In Africa, the most significant achievements under resolution 1325 (2000) have taken place in post-conflict environments where women now enjoy considerably enhanced role in decision-making. Strengthened by the African Union's 2005 Protocol on the Rights of Women and the 2004 Heads of States Solemn Declaration on Gender Equity in Africa, a number of countries have scaled up women's participation in politics and decision-making.

Through specific measures such as a gender quota and a minimum threshold, some countries have accelerated the integration of women into national decision-making processes. Increasingly, women are also being included in national and continental peace and security initiatives.

Nigeria has signed and ratified the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. It has also taken special measures to guarantee the participation of women in governance and decision-making. At both the federal and State levels, efforts are being made to outlaw discriminatory customary or traditional practices that are harmful to the physical and mental health of women and girls.

The federal Government is also working closely with traditional rulers and non-governmental and faith-based organizations to change long-held attitudes and negative perceptions about women and to inculcate in young men respect for the fundamental rights of women and girls. School curricula and public enlightenment campaigns are also focusing on positive gender values, including the promotion of gender equality in all spheres.

The cumulative effect of those initiatives has led to a significant increase in the literacy levels of women and girls and in the number of women pursuing careers in male-dominated occupations. The country's national health policies and plans have also become more gender-sensitive, and, in the case of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, due consideration of the special needs of women have become standard policy objectives. Nigeria has also made remarkable progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to women and children.

Notwithstanding these modest efforts, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in Africa's conflict environments remains fitful. The most critical challenge, as we see it, is the concrete implementation of special measures to protect women and children against sexual violence and the prosecution of those responsible for large-scale violations of women's rights.

Another important challenge is how to institutionalize gender-sensitive policies through the domestic implementation of relevant international conventions and mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action to prevent violence against women.

In addition, the political will necessary for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the national and regional levels is not evident in many cases. The fact that there is no requirement in place to ensure the universal observance of relevant conventions and principles has created further room for inconsistency among States.

My delegation considers it imperative that these challenges be seen as constituting lessons learned that should guide the United Nations as it seeks to put an end to this unconscionable aspect of armed conflict. To meet these challenges, the international community must have a clear understanding of the multidimensional nature of the problem to enable it to take remedial action, as appropriate.

Our responsibilities must include preventing sexual violence against women, providing protection for them, assisting and caring for the children born of rape, including those who are victimized by the culture of impunity. Indeed, it is our responsibility to comfort and heal the communities savaged by these crimes.

More importantly, we must strengthen punitive measures so that perpetrators and those responsible for

breaches are brought to justice. To enhance such measures, there is a need for greater participation by women in the civil and military components of multilateral peace support operations.

We would also like to see gender sensitive training imparted to male civil and military personnel to foster the awareness of gender issues. The need to integrate gender perspectives and training into peacekeeping in Africa is critical, considering that well over 80 per cent of United Nations peacekeepers are currently deployed in Africa.

I have elaborated on some of the challenges we face in protecting women from sexual violence in situations of conflict. There are more. For instance, we also need to strengthen dissemination, sensitization and monitoring mechanisms in conflict zones. Conflict monitoring and early warning systems are also needed to help avert the prevalence of sexual violence during and after conflicts. There is also a need to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of humanitarian assistance in camps where women have been known to be especially vulnerable.

Health and education programmes should be developed to deal with the effects of sexual violence, such as HIV/AIDS and psychological trauma. Additionally, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the relevant agencies and bodies involved in these efforts by identifying the various actors, programmes and activities relative to resolution 1325 (2000) in Africa.

It is also important to make a clear commitment to move the implementation of the resolution forward. In this regard, we support the call for the Secretary-General to periodically report to the Security Council on the use of sexual violence against women in situations of armed conflict. We also invite the Secretary-General to utilize existing regional and subregional resources such as the Economic Community of West African States early warning systems and security architecture to strengthen the protection of women.

We also call on the United Nations to take a more strategic view of this problem, with clear, action-oriented commitments to ensure measurable improvements in the lives of victims.

The challenges we have outlined thus far are daunting, but they are well within our capacity to address. We can prevent sexual violence and protect victims because we all have a good idea what the problems are, and their physical and social costs.

My delegation believes that, by working together, we can also make perpetrators account for their misdeeds. Today's discussion is, therefore, a welcome first step.

Once again, we thank the United States delegation for initiating this dialogue and for laying before us a very helpful draft resolution. My delegation can associate itself with the draft resolution, and we expect others to do the same.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I commend the United States presidency on the initiative of convening this open thematic debate on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and express appreciation to Ms. Rice for her participation and leadership.

This debate is rather timely, as we are witnessing an increase in the reporting of cases of violence against women around the globe. In the case of armed conflicts, the shocking images broadcast by the media are deeply disturbing and attest to the gravity of the problem. It is simply despicable. Rape and all other forms of sexual abuse must be vehemently condemned, no matter their purpose, and perpetrators punished.

Our collective consternation and indignation must lead to action. If we are to successfully face this most daunting challenge, we need to design and implement practical, concrete measures to adequately address the issue, with the involvement of the international community as a whole.

Current international instruments provide an adequate framework and the necessary basis for such work. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols are all important references in the effort we need to undertake. Also relevant are the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and pertinent instruments of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) must play a central role in such a strategy. It should be carried out in conjunction with that of all General Assembly resolutions on violence against women, the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the 1974 General Assembly Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, in accordance with which all forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal.

Our common efforts on the ground can also benefit from the accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise of the United Nations system, in particular the relevant agencies, programmes and funds of the Organization. They are invaluable partners in a strategy to combat violence against women in armed conflicts.

Ending impunity must also be part of our collective efforts. No woman or girl victim of sexual violence can reconstruct her life unless the cycle of recurrence is broken. Beyond a lack of respect for the human being, impunity signals the continuation of a horrendous crime, which has multiplying negative effects on family members and the community as a whole.

For that reason, we must strengthen the crucial role played by the International Criminal Court in ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of rape and other forms of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence, all considered crimes against humanity, as defined in the Rome Statute.

An effective response to violence against women requires a comprehensive approach in which peace and security concerns are integrated into a human-rights-based perspective. In that regard, empowering women and girls must be at the centre of any effort to address gender-based violence. The overall situation of women and girls will improve only if equal participation in decision-making at all levels is ensured.

In the specific case of armed conflicts, the full-fledged participation of women in peacebuilding efforts is critical. In this respect, more interaction is necessary between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, under Article 65 of the Charter. We should also make full use of the possibilities of cooperation within the Peacebuilding Commission, which can contribute to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). As we see in the country-specific case of Guinea-Bissau, peacebuilding can greatly benefit from women's perspectives and actions.

In the Americas, Brazil is involved in an initiative of South-South cooperation carried out within the scope of the Brazilian contribution to the consolidation of peace in Haiti. This initiative, based on our domestic experience, supports the implementation of the Haitian national plan to prevent violence against women and to address the needs of women victims of sexual violence. It is developed through the exchange of experts and good practices, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund and OXFAM.

In concluding, I reiterate Brazil's political and practical commitment to international efforts designed to end all forms of violence against women. My delegation hopes that the Council's adoption of the draft resolution, "Women and peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict", will help us to attain that goal.

The President: I call on the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United States for organizing today's open debate and giving us the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

Sexual violence in armed conflict shows a very serious gap in the protection of civilians that was rightly recognized and addressed in resolution 1325 (2000). We look forward to the adoption today of the draft resolution, of which we are co-authors, affirming that the prevention of acts of sexual violence can contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are deeply troubled that sexual violence against women and girls is still prevalent in situations of armed conflict. Such conduct is unacceptable, and even more so when committed by peacekeeping personnel.

Switzerland has adopted an action plan for national implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and it attaches the highest priority to combating gender-based and sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

Practical measures are urgently needed in order to strengthen prevention of and protection against sexual violence. To this end, the following four priority lines of action should be considered.

First, Switzerland stresses the importance of fighting against impunity. Acts of sexual violence must not go unpunished. The prosecution of persons suspected of having committed such acts is, first and foremost, the task of States. However, when States are unwilling or unable to prosecute acts of sexual violence amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, such cases must be referred to the International Criminal Court. The Court clearly has a crucial role to play in fighting impunity.

It is therefore essential to build up national law enforcement capacities to ensure that States are able to prosecute the perpetrators of sexual violence. Without improved understanding of the root causes, the mechanisms and the consequences of acts of sexual violence, the perpetrators of gender-based and sexual violence will continue to enjoy impunity.

Furthermore, disciplinary measures at the unit commander level cannot be a substitute for military criminal prosecution.

Secondly, systematic gender training should be given to personnel working in the security sector, including those in the armed forces, police and justice systems, as well as United Nations personnel. Security personnel must be able to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to the different security needs of women and men. It is therefore crucially important that senior management personnel be included in gender training programmes to ensure that dealing with sexual violence against women forms an integral part of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We welcome the specific references to the matter in the draft resolution.

Thirdly, the Security Council should consider establishing a monitoring mechanism to increase accountability and ensure the integration of resolution 1325 (2000) into country-specific and related thematic work. To this end, the Council should also set up a structure for obtaining timely, accurate and reliable information on sexual violence committed in situations of armed conflict. United Nations field missions could be entrusted with this task and thus serve as an early warning system.

In addition, the Security Council could ask the Secretary-General to submit reports on best practices, based on the expertise of specialized agencies or programmes, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women and UNICEF, and take into account the security assessments of local and international women's organizations.

Fourthly, the Security Council may wish to consider the problem of sexual violence against women and girls, as referred to in resolution 1325 (2000), in conjunction with resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and resolution 1612 (2005), on children and armed conflict.

Finally, Switzerland supports implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on this issue and the establishment of conduct and disciplinary units in all peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, cooperation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services should be strengthened. The goal is clear: all United Nations personnel — military or civilian — must be trained in the highest standards of conduct and be held responsible for maintaining them.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): I am grateful to the Council for the opportunity to address it on the subject of women and peace and security. My Government commends the United States presidency of the Security Council, under your able leadership, Mr. President, for the work that it has invested in this important issue.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made earlier today by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Eight years on from the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), it is indeed time to assess progress towards achieving its major goals. The resolution has helped to promote the equal participation and full involvement of women in efforts to advance peace and security. It has also sought to protect women and girls from, and indeed to prevent, gender-based violence.

However, it remains a challenge to ensure that the United Nations, both institutionally and through its individual Member States, fully implements resolution 1325 (2000). Last October the Council regretted that

> "gender-based violence, particularly rape, and other forms of sexual abuse ... remain pervasive, and in some situations have become systematic, and have reached appalling levels of atrocity." (*S/PRST/2007/40*)

Such a grave situation requires an urgent and effective response from the international community, in the first place from the Security Council.

The Irish Government, for its part, is actively engaged in promoting the role of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery. The recent establishment of a major conflict-resolution dimension within our Foreign Ministry has opened further avenues for Ireland to support implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in conflict and post-conflict settings. Resolution 1325 (2000) is to be one of the three cross-cutting themes which guide the work of a new designated Conflict Resolution Unit in the Ministry. Women's participation in the Northern Ireland peace process, together with the presence of a strong research and activist base, will permit tangible lessons to be drawn and shared internationally in helping advance and implement the resolution 1325 (2000) agenda.

As Chair of the 12-member Human Security Network for the period through May next year, Ireland will focus its work on the theme of gender-based violence. In line with the Beijing Platform for Action, the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence is a prominent feature of Ireland's aid policy and activities overseas, and of our National Women's Strategy at home.

In 2004, in response to reports particularly of rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Darfur, Ireland established a national Joint Consortium on Gender-Based Violence. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has lent her valuable support as a patron. This unique body marks the first time in my country that human rights, development and humanitarian agencies have cooperated with Government agencies, including those in uniform, to confront collectively the issue of gender-based violence. Training on gender equality and protection from such violence is provided to Irish peacekeepers at the United Nations Training School Ireland, in our Defence Forces Training Centre.

We support the leading role of the United Nations in ending violence against women, including through the new multi-year programme launched recently by the Secretary-General. We strongly support, in practical ways, the gender equality work of the United Nations Development Programme, including the Eight-Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

I turn now to the very useful concept paper drawn up by the United States presidency of the Council in preparation for today's debate. It correctly identifies three priority areas for consideration: understanding the problem; prevention and protection; and consequences for accused perpetrators.

As far as understanding the problem is concerned, Ireland encourages the Security Council to recognize that sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in conflict situations have direct and significant relevance to the maintenance of international peace and security. Accordingly, in our view the Council should ensure systematic monitoring and analysis of such violence, and, where appropriate, take steps, measures and action to address it.

We also encourage the Council to request the Secretary-General systematically to include in all reports on conflict situations comprehensive information about acts of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls. Moreover, Ireland encourages the Council to request the Secretary-General to reflect on ways to improve the level and quality of such reporting, using benchmarks, indicators and monitoring mechanisms.

On prevention and protection, Ireland would encourage the Council to request the Secretary-General to report to it on a heightened engagement of the United Nations in stopping gender-based violence in conflict situations. Such a report or study could draw on United Nations action already under way and on activities of non-governmental organizations and women's groups at the local, national and international levels. Ireland supports the call for the appointment of an independent expert to lead such a study.

We would also encourage the Council to ensure that women at the local level can actively participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies and programmes to meet their security needs, interests and concerns.

Ireland believes that there ought to be consequences for perpetrators. Accountability by State and non-State actors should be ensured, including through effective prosecution and punishment.

Security sector reform and capacity-building for police and the judicial sector are also called for in this connection.

The inclusion of sexual violence offences in the Statutes of the ad hoc international criminal tribunals, and the considered jurisprudence of those tribunals, has, over a short space of time, progressively developed the law in this area in many important respects. Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence are now included within the definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity found within the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Council can, of course, refer a situation for investigation by the Prosecutor of the Court — an institution which Ireland fully supports.

There should be wider application of best practices for effective prevention and prosecution of sexual crimes committed in situations of armed conflict. Council mandates for conflict situations should provide that local commanders and their superiors in the military chain of command of armed parties to conflict can be held accountable. All too often, military commanders and other superiors fail to take necessary and reasonable steps within their control either to prevent sexual violence against civilians or to punish the perpetrators of such crimes. Military commanders and other superiors should be held accountable for such serious acts of omission on their part. Impunity can be reduced by ensuring that women are involved to the greatest extent possible in peace negotiations and in any associated amnesty provisions.

In conclusion, Ireland welcomes the intended adoption later today of a draft resolution, which we are pleased to co-sponsor, on this important issue. We believe that it should help to empower women to fully participate in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. It must be effectively implemented to ensure that countless women and girls in conflict situations receive more adequate and effective protection from sexual violence.

Adoption of today's draft resolution will recognize that the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is a threat to sustainable international peace and security. And, under the law, principal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests here, in this Chamber.

Ireland hopes, therefore, that the Security Council will act on its own analysis and promote with all necessary vigour wider respect for, and implementation of, its resolutions so as to halt and eliminate sexual violence against women and girls in situations of conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): First, Mr. President, on behalf of Canada I thank you for taking the initiative of this open debate. It is important that it mark the beginning of a more concentrated effort on the part of the Council to combat and prevent sexual violence.

Such violence, especially against women and girls, continues at alarming levels in many conflict and post-conflict situations, including as a deliberate weapon of war. It is high time that all involved in the maintenance of peace and security stepped up to address this issue.

Sexual and other forms of violence against civilians in conflict-affected situations can, in many circumstances, constitute a threat to international peace and security. It is more than clear in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, for example, that sexual violence is a security problem requiring a security response. It is imperative that the issue be addressed by the Council.

Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, adopted in 2000, calls for special measures to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and emphasizes the need to end impunity for war crimes, including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls. Eight years later, there remain significant challenges to the full implementation of those commitments.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to the equal participation and full involvement of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, including in peace processes, and remind ourselves of the need to take concrete measures to increase their role in decision-making with respect to conflict prevention and resolution.

Canada was pleased to co-sponsor three weeks ago a conference on the role of military peacekeepers in addressing sexual violence. Participants in the conference came from military, police, civilian and diplomatic backgrounds. Among the conclusions that emerged very clearly were that peacekeeping missions need clear and strong mandates from the Security Council; that doctrine must be developed to provide guidance to the missions; and that the Council's monitoring of sexual violence and efforts to address it must become more systematic.

Canada has called on the Council repeatedly to establish a mechanism to monitor the integration of resolution 1325 (2000) into its daily work. We reiterate that call today. In relation to this, information on violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, should be systematically included in all relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the Council. Rigorous data collection and monitoring would increase the Council's capacity to develop effective peace support mandates that better address this violence, including by way of prevention.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada welcomes the most recent renewal of the peacekeeping mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in resolution 1794 (2007), which gives the Mission a more explicit mandate for action to eliminate sexual violence. Unfortunately, the notable absence of equally strong provisions regarding sexual violence in resolutions 1795 (2008) on Côte d'Ivoire and 1812 (2008) on the Sudan, both adopted after resolution 1794 (2007), demonstrate that inconsistency in the Council's approach to sexual violence in mission mandates continues.

Canada believes that a report by the Secretary-General to the Council including recommendations to improve the United Nations response would be useful. The report should draw on the full breadth of expertise, including from the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and from non-governmental organizations. An independent expert could be appointed to lead the study.

Impunity for sexual violence against women and girls and men and boys is rampant in conflict situations. Canada urges countries to cooperate with regard to the four conflict and post-conflict situations being addressed by the International Criminal Court — namely, those in the Darfur region of the Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda — to ensure that perpetrators of serious international crimes are held responsible.

In that regard, as co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, Canada strongly urges the early implementation at the domestic level of the binding Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children adopted in December 2006, which demands the guarantee that sexual violence in the region shall be punishable both in time of peace and in situations of armed conflict.

In conclusion, Canada is resolved to actively support the efforts of the Security Council to combat sexual violence in conflict situations. We encourage the development of a doctrine to address and prevent sexual violence. It should now be abundantly clear to all that the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war requires an effective, timely and commensurate response by the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you very much, Mr. President, for having organized this debate.

My delegation believes that the United Nations plays an essential role in combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. There can be no question that it is essential to bolster the work of the Organization in this area, as well as to improve its internal coordination to ensure a more effective long-term impact.

Ecuador is fully committed to this effort. We are a State party to all the relevant international instruments and have co-sponsored several General Assembly resolutions on this subject. In its own area of responsibility, the Security Council made a major contribution to this effort by adopting several resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, especially as regards women and children. More specifically, the Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), several of whose paragraphs specifically refer to the subject of this debate, namely, sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

Several elements of the draft resolution to be adopted by the Council today are incorporated in

resolution 1325 (2000), including the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacekeeping, the issue of gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations and the elimination of all types of gender-based violence, especially rape and sexual violence.

My delegation believes that, with respect to the need to request a report from the Secretary-General on this issue, such a report should deal with situations that fall under the competency of the Security Council and that are clearly inscribed on its agenda; otherwise, there could be duplication of effort, as certain resolutions of the General Assembly also call for similar reports from the Secretariat on this matter.

Ecuador believes that, despite the major efforts being made by the Council, it is urgent to achieve closer cooperation between the main organs of the United Nations — bearing in mind that the General Assembly is the universal body responsible for providing a normative framework underpinning the decisions of all States on the issue we are debating today. My delegation therefore shares the view of the President of the General Assembly that the subject of sexual violence, including that perpetrated in the course of armed conflict, should continue to be considered by the General Assembly in a systematic and ongoing manner — as was the case during this session with the consensus adoption of Assembly resolution 62/134, on the elimination of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all its aspects, including in armed conflict and similar situations — as well as in the thematic debates convened by the President of the General Assembly on the issues of human security and human trafficking. The General Assembly also addressed this issue in its annual resolution on all forms of violence against women, which was also adopted by Member States by consensus.

Ensuring an end to impunity and acknowledging that victims have rights are decisive elements in combating all forms of sexual violence against women, including sexual violence as a weapon of war. Ecuador believes in the essential role of the International Criminal Court in combating impunity, as well as in its contribution to peacebuilding processes. The international community should commit itself to ensuring that no one enjoys immunity for such crimes under any circumstances. That should be our commitment to the victims and our contribution to peace and justice.

Like other delegations, we believe that such a sensitive subject as the one before us today, which should be of concern to all countries, including Ecuador, should be considered in a comprehensive and systematic manner by all Member States. Such consideration should not be confined solely to the issue of sexual violence, but should also address all forms of violence against women and girls.

One way to prevent armed conflict and all forms of violence and discrimination they generate is to address poverty and underdevelopment head-on in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, to whose achievement all Member States committed themselves.

Ecuador will continue to cooperate with the international community to ensure that all forms of violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence, are eliminated from every country and region of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to say how very much I appreciate your timely initiative to convene this meeting.

As stated in the concept paper, recent reports indicate that brutal and systematic rape is becoming increasingly commonplace in some conflict and post-conflict situations. In fact, sexual violence in situations of armed conflict has occurred throughout history, including sexual slavery during the Second World War. It is our firm belief that the adoption of the noble Charter of the United Nations is a clear manifestation of our strong commitment to preventing the recurrence of such a brutal and categorical denial of the human rights of women. However, contrary to our call for consciousness and commitment, we have witnessed the horrifying intensity and severity of sexual violence in armed conflict, which has been exercised as a weapon of war, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Darfur.

My delegation would like to make clear its position on key issues for today's deliberations. First, with respect to the link between sexual violence and peace and security, the Republic of Korea fully recognizes that sexual violence is a security issue as well as a fundamental human rights issue.

Secondly, based on the recognition of the direct link between sexual violence and peace and security, mandates for peacekeeping operations regarding sexual violence should be further strengthened and clarified. At the same time, my delegation believes that efforts should be intensified to implement the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, on the reporting mechanism, our delegation is of the view that the Security Council must institutionalize and systematize its consideration of sexual violence in armed conflict. For that purpose, an action plan of the Secretary-General is recommended, with priority accorded to establishing a mechanism to collect information and to reporting periodically to the Council on such situations.

Last but not least is the issue of impunity. My delegation reaffirms its support for any efforts to end impunity, recognizing that accountability is a crucial component in the process of ending the cycle of systematic sexual violence against women. We believe that referring cases to the International Criminal Court or to the tribunals will send a strong and effective message to the perpetrators, as ending impunity is a critical element of a comprehensive approach to the quest for sustainable peace, justice, truth and national reconciliation. Furthermore, amnesty should not be granted to the perpetrators of sexual violence. We are also of the view that, in addition to ensuring, by putting an end to impunity, that individuals are held responsible, the responsibility of the State for the situation and for the protection of victims should also be further enhanced.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to draw the attention of the Council to the issue of children in armed conflict, given the daunting reality that a large percentage of victims of sexual violence in armed conflicts are children. I would like to recall that the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on children in armed conflict, expressing its readiness to review the relevant provisions of resolution 1612 (2005) with a view to further increasing the efficiency of its action for the protection of children from sexual violence in armed conflict. We look forward to substantive progress in that regard.

My delegation fully supports and is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution to be adopted today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the convening of this important open debate on women and peace and security because it gives us the opportunity to present our views on the matter.

Gender equality, progress towards the empowerment of women and the promotion of international peace and security are essential elements of my country's foreign policy. Mexico recognizes that the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) constitutes a milestone in gender mainstreaming in connection with peace and security.

Nonetheless, we are concerned by the limited progress that has been made in this area. We continue to witness recurring cases of widespread and systematic sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. The international community cannot remain inactive given this alarming situation. Such abominable acts of sexual violence constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity when they are committed as part of a generalized and systematic campaign against a civilian population, as stated by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

For that reason, Mexico joins with the Council in demanding the immediate and complete cessation of all acts of sexual violence. We cannot tolerate such abuses, whereby women and children continue to be the principal victims of deliberate attacks by armed groups and armies.

However, if that appeal is to be morally effective, it is necessary to put an end to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel, in particular peacekeepers. Mexico believes that, although the United Nations has made progress in developing standards of conduct for peacekeeping personnel and in the strategy to protect and support victims of exploitation and sexual abuse committed by United Nations personnel, greater efforts must be made to ensure that we have an effective international response mechanism that can undertake timely action to deal with cases of gender violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Mexico reiterates that we must continue to develop and implement mandatory training programmes on gender issues for United Nations personnel involved in peacekeeping operations and in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Mexico reiterates its unequivocal rejection of the use of sexual violence as a strategy of war and joins the Council's call on all States to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice. Likewise, we agree that effective measures must be taken to prevent and respond to acts of widespread or systematic sexual violence in order to contribute to international peace and security.

We hope that the report that has been requested of the Secretary-General through the draft resolution before the Council will clearly identify practical proposals regarding strategies to minimize the vulnerability of women and girls to this type of violence. It is essential that our political will to eliminate sexual violence in situations of armed conflict be reflected in concrete outcomes. We cannot allow more time to pass. We have a moral obligation to act now, in a decisive manner.

Mexico is a staunch promoter of international humanitarian law. My country believes that the use of sexual violence, because of its very serious humanitarian consequences, together with the use of weapons that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects, such as antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions, should be excluded entirely from all military doctrines.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria warmly welcomes and highly appreciates the initiative of the United States presidency and fully supports the measures contained in the draft resolution to be adopted later today. We are, as the Council is aware, very pleased to be a sponsor of this important draft resolution.

The issue of women and peace and security is a foreign policy priority for Austria. In the past eight years, visible progress has been made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We now have a set of clear rules under international law to prevent violence against women, including sexual violence in armed conflict. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out in today's debate, the prevalence and brutality of acts of sexual violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world have reached a level requiring urgent attention and action by the international community.

We all agree that sexual violence is often not only a mere manifestation of war but, rather, a deliberate tactic of warfare. That practice and the adverse effects it has on peace processes, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction make it clear that sexual violence against women is indeed a security threat.

We highly appreciate the important efforts already under way within the framework of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also strongly support the system-wide campaign to end violence against women and hope to see significant progress leading up to 2015. Recent measures strengthening the enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers and related personnel constitute a major contribution. The United Nations must lead by example. Sexual violence is unacceptable under all circumstances.

Women must have a seat and a voice at negotiation tables. Regrettably, women's representation in peace processes is still the exception. In its national action plan on implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Austria has made a clear commitment to lobby worldwide for women's participation in all peace efforts. Conferences in Vienna last year, bringing together women leaders from the Middle East, as well as from Serbia and Kosovo, were important opportunities to establish networks which allow for the multiplication of women's voices and for enhancing influence.

We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's recent appointments of women as special representatives and envoys and to leading positions in the Secretariat. We hope to see more such appointments in the future and reiterate our call for Member States to support, encourage and nominate women for such positions.

Despite clear rules under international law outlawing sexual violence, perpetrators still largely go unpunished. This situation demands further action by the Security Council to strengthen the rule of law in order to end impunity. Unfortunately, some of the existing mechanisms and tools of the Council have been underutilized. We therefore call on the Council to make full use of the range of measures and tools available, including the imposition of targeted measures and referrals to the International Criminal Court. We also call on Member States to strengthen the

rule of law and fully utilize accountability mechanisms to bring to justice perpetrators of violations against women and girls.

In this context, I would like to draw the Council's attention to our initiative on the Security Council and the rule of law, which contains 17 concrete recommendations on how the Security Council could strengthen the rule of law. Recommendations 8 and 9 specifically address the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The report was recently issued as a United Nations document (S/2008/270, annex) and is available in all official languages.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking the United States presidency for having organized this open debate, which clearly reflects the Security Council's commitment to full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and, in particular, the growing concern regarding the use of various forms of sexual violence against the civilian population, particularly women and girls, in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In the framework of a human rights perspective, Argentina places high priority on the situation of women and girls in conflict situations, and on the participation of women as key protagonists in peace processes and in peacebuilding.

Resolution 1325 (2000) provides a legal framework which allows for the effective participation of women at the national and international levels, within the broader and indispensable legal framework comprising the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, on women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century (General Assembly resolutions S-23/2 and S-23/3), as well as other relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, specifically Assembly resolutions 58/185, on the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, and 62/134 on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations.

As a reflection of this deep commitment, Argentina is one of four countries carrying out the pilot programme for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and has started to take concrete actions, including the first regional workshop for the development of a gender policy for peace operations, held in our country in May with a view to strengthening alliances at all levels to move forward on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations.

In this regard, we would like to note that Argentina has fully incorporated United Nations recommendations on gender in all aspects of its participation in peacekeeping operations. The Argentine Joint Peacekeeping Operations Training Centre has also incorporated a gender perspective in its doctrine, both at the administrative level and in the curricula of its training programmes.

As of January 2008, 26 Argentine women were participating in peacekeeping missions, particularly the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. In 2007, 36 per cent of our participants in White Helmet humanitarian missions were women, a figure which is expected to reach 43 per cent in 2008.

Increasing numbers of reports from the field alert us on the use of sexual violence as a political or military tool in some current conflicts. A regrettable chapter of our past has shown us that rape and other heinous forms of sexual violence can be used by agents of the State as a tool to spread terror, and to torture and degrade those whom it considers their "enemies".

Sexual violence as a method of warfare is categorically prohibited. The widespread and systematic use of sexual violence is a grave violation of international law, particularly in the light of the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court and by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

Considering these realities, Argentina is persuaded of the need urgently to adopt effective measures to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence against civilian populations, which will significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Such measures should include, inter alia, the protection of civilians, in particular women and girl children; the training of military and security personnel; the adoption and

effective enforcement of appropriate legislation; and community-based work and care for the victims.

In order to ensure that effective measures are adopted, we consider that a report of the Secretary-General would be particularly useful. It should organize and analyse the information available to the United Nations system, with a specific focus on the shocking phenomenon of sexual violence as a political and military tool.

Lastly, Argentina is of the view that any effective response to this question must be two-pronged: promotion of full respect for the human rights of victims and an end to impunity for perpetrators. In this regard, we believe that the draft resolution before the Council today would have benefited from a strengthened legal framework, particularly with a firm reaffirmation of the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, the main tool available to the international community today to ensure that nobody can with impunity commit heinous crimes, such as those which we are considering today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your initiative in organizing this debate on the subject of women and peace and security. We particularly appreciate the presence of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, who presided over our work this morning.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, Mrs. Olubanke King-Akerele; and Major-General Patrick Cammaert, former Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for their briefings.

Colombia rejects all forms of sexual violence, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse. On that basis, my country has been reporting on the progress it has achieved in implementing resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

Colombia has also been fulfilling the commitments set out in resolution 1325 (2000) and has submitted the corresponding reports pursuant to that resolution, which has allowed us to raise awareness of the important role of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts.

In Colombia, the Presidential Office for Women's Equality has strengthened the incorporation of the gender dimension in all Government bodies, particularly through the policy on "Women Building Peace and Development". That policy reflects the Government's determination to include gender mainstreaming, in a cross-cutting manner, in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies.

In addition, the military relies on a comprehensive human rights and international humanitarian law policy and have launched a programme aimed at strengthening reproductive and sexual rights and gender equity within that institution.

Also noteworthy is the role of the National Commission for Redress and Reconciliation, which was established for the purpose of facilitating peace processes and the individual or group reintegration of members of illegal armed groups. The Commission seeks to guarantee the rights of victims to truth, justice and redress. It has incorporated a gender perspective in its work as well as the recommendations contained in resolution 1325 (2000).

On the basis of the efforts of the Commission, among other factors, and its work with the Office of the Attorney General and with women victims, crimes associated with sexual violence are being addressed in a more effective manner. As an example, trials are being held that, in addition to their purpose of prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes, also contribute to preventing them and to protecting the victims. Many of those victims, in particular women, have come forward to denounce criminal actions such as sexual violence.

In addition, the Office of the High Adviser for Social and Economic Reintegration has provided humanitarian assistance to more than 2,600 women who had been partners of members of illegal armed groups and who have received benefits such as physical security, shelter, food and psychosocial support. Special emphasis has been placed on the provision of support for the settlement of disputes arising from domestic violence and for the holding of workshops on the issue of respect for and the integrity of women.

Colombia will continue to follow this course of action, with particular emphasis on the areas of participation, prevention, protection and the combat against impunity, in the quest to eliminate all forms of sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on women and peace and security highlights the role of regional organizations in the implementation of the plan of action 2008-2009 relating to resolution 1325 (2000).

My delegation would like to draw attention, in this perspective, to the high-level dialogue that took place in Chile in November 2007, at which the Latin American and Caribbean authorities charged with dealing with this subject carried out an assessment of the developments relating to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the national level and shared experiences on best practices. This type of activity is particularly useful in developing management and information systems that take into account each region's individual characteristics and priorities.

We would like also to underline the role of the Inter-American Commission on Women, as the relevant body of the Organization of American States in this field, as well as its important efforts in the quest to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

My delegation notes with interest the increasing participation of women in tasks related to peacekeeping. The example of the all-female police contingent from India in the United Nations Mission in Liberia constitutes a point of reference on progress in this area and makes a positive contribution to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We echo the support expressed for initiatives aimed at ensuring a higher percentage of women in peacekeeping forces.

Lastly, my delegation would like to underscore how important it is that the action of the Security Council on issues related to sexual violence be focused on situations where peacekeeping missions are deployed and that are on the Council's agenda. This includes due regard for the continuation of zero-tolerance policies for sexual exploitation and abuse in such operations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mrs. Kafanabo (United Republic of Tanzania): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security. By focusing our discussion on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, the Security Council will be sending an authoritative message of condemnation to those parties that are perpetrating or condoning such acts in conflict situations as well as a message of hope to the victims. This debate is also contributing to defining an international code against sexual violence in conflict situations.

I thank the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General and all the presenters for their informative presentations on this subject earlier today.

The concern for the protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence has been reflected in various Security Council documents. It is unfortunate that, despite the numerous calls made to protect women and girls, there has been an escalation of systematic and brutal acts of sexual violence and abuses as calculated instruments of war against civilians, especially women and girls. The Security Council, with the support of Member States, needs to take bold measures to stop this trend. It is our expectation, therefore, that this open debate will lead to recommendations that will enable the Security Council to respond effectively to the use of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations and to galvanize concerted international action against such crimes.

It is high time that we recognized sexual violence in conflict situations as a pervasive criminal act with global repercussions. Such acts of targeted violence add new dimensions to regional and international peace and security. We call upon all parties to conflict to end these barbarous acts and to take measures to protect civilians, including women and girls.

The Security Council needs to send a clear message to parties in armed conflicts that sexual violence in any manifestation is not condoned and that stern measures will be taken against the perpetrators so as to end impunity. We thus call upon Member States to comply with their obligations to prosecute perpetrators and to support the work of the International Criminal Court in that regard.

It is unfortunate that civilians, and in particular women and girls, are increasingly being targeted in current warfare. Humanitarian law is being blatantly violated and perpetrators escape with impunity. There

is thus an enormous challenge to the international community as a whole and to peacekeeping missions in particular to ensure that civilians are protected.

We are encouraged that sexual violence is included in some peacekeeping protection of civilian mandates. These mandates, however, need to be matched with political resolve and resources, doctrine and guidance. In the same vein, the national defence policies of troop-contributing countries need to be explicit and emphatic on protection of civilians, including women and girls, in the training of troops for peacekeeping missions. Equally, national laws must be robust in dealing with those responsible for such acts of violence.

Sexual violence in conflict situations needs to be addressed holistically. In that regard, efforts to encourage women to report it when they are attacked, as well as mechanisms to assist the victims, need to be in place. In addition, programmes to strengthen the rule of law need to be implemented so as to end impunity and provide justice for the victims. In the longer term, community-based interventions to address the health, psychosocial and educational needs of children and adults, including men and boys, affected by and implicated in the violence need also to be in place. This means that interventions need to be carried out during and after a conflict.

While we believe that national Governments have the primary responsibility for the protection of their nationals, the support of the international community, as appropriate, is critical in addressing sexual violence in conflict situations.

Let me conclude by reiterating that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania strongly condemns all acts of sexual and gender-based violence in all their manifestations. It is in this regard that Tanzania joined in sponsoring last year's General Assembly resolution 62/134, entitled "Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations", and is among the sponsors of the draft resolution to be adopted today. We are willing to work with the international community to end sexual and gender-based violence as well as to end impunity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ney (Germany): Germany welcomes this open thematic debate on women and peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. I would like to express Germany's appreciation to the United States, which currently holds the presidency of the Security Council, for this important initiative. Complementing the statement made by the Republic of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, Germany would like to add the following remarks.

We are deeply shocked by recent, and recurring, reports indicating that brutal rapes are increasingly becoming commonplace in conflict and post-conflict situations. The pervasive and sometimes systematic use of sexual violence against women and girls, particularly rape or even gang rape and other forms of sexual abuse, does not only belong to the most serious violations of human rights. Sexual violence can also constitute a threat to international peace and security, when used or commissioned in situations of armed conflict as a method of war in order to deliberately target civilians or other protected persons or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations.

We therefore have to recognize sexual violence as a security problem requiring a systematic security response, including through attention by the Security Council and by the International Criminal Court. We have to increase all our efforts, on all levels, to find adequate responses and to end impunity for these crimes.

In this context, Germany highly welcomes the initiative entitled Stop Rape Now: United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, launched last year, as well as the Secretary-General's campaign entitled Unite to End Violence Against Women, which he launched during the recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We particularly welcome the personal commitment that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon attaches to this campaign.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone in creating awareness of the urgent need to protect women and girls from sexual abuse in armed conflicts, but also in acknowledging the crucial role that women can and should have in all efforts to promote peace and security.

Germany reaffirms its commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

We just submitted a comprehensive and detailed report to the Secretariat on Germany's contributions to the individual demands of resolution 1325 (2000). This report documents a variety of measures both at national and global level, ranging from efforts to increase representation of women in all decision-making mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, to concrete projects aimed at ending violence against women. Last year, the German federal Government also presented its second action plan to combat violence against women.

The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is an essential part of the United Nations mandate. A coherent and effective implementation of this mandate, including resolution 1325 (2000), needs a coherent and effective United Nations gender architecture. Germany supports the strengthening of the normative and operative work of the United Nations on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This week's informal debate in the General Assembly showed once again the broad commitment to a reform of the United Nations gender architecture. We now need concrete steps forward in order to enable the United Nations to better deliver for women and girls all around the world.

We look forward to further discussion on women and peace and security within the Security Council. The topics of gender equality and women's empowerment, and, more specifically, of sexual violence, should not only be part of an annual open debate, but should be continuously considered and mainstreamed in the daily work of the Council and in all discussions of conflict and post-conflict situations. Germany therefore welcomes the fact that information on sexual violence will now be systematically included in the Council's country situation reports. We had also supported proposals towards a specific mechanism in this regard, because we believe that effective prevention starts with systematic reporting and reliable data. We hope that the Council will return to this issue in its future discussions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for having organized this thematic debate on women and peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. We believe that today's discussions, like the previous debate, in October 2007 (see S/PV.5766), will be a useful contribution to the efforts to focus on the main issues contained in resolution 1325 (2000).

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to resolution 1325 (2000), which draws the attention of the international community to the crucial issue of the detrimental impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.

My delegation once again reaffirms its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence against women and girls as a tool of warfare.

Since the adoption of the resolution, the Security Council has organized regular reviews to assess its implementation. Despite some progress, that implementation is still slow and uneven. As has already been pointed out by other delegations, we too agree that women's involvement in decision-making with regard to security issues and the peacebuilding process has a positive effect on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and on post-conflict rehabilitation. Having said that, my delegation fully commends the efforts aimed at increasing women's involvement in the decision-making process in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

However, as the most vulnerable group of civilians due to their gender and social status, women and girls continue to be the main victims of sexual assault during conflicts. The situation is further exacerbated as a result of the fact that gross violations against women and girls in zones of armed conflict are often concealed. Because they are stigmatized by local communities, victims usually tend to disguise information about abuse out of fear for their lives and families. There is therefore insufficient evidence to make the case against perpetrators.

In that regard, we would like to underscore the importance of developing victim protection systems similar to existing programmes for witness protection; strengthening legislation on the responsibility of perpetrators for crimes against women and girls in conflict zones; and working with local communities to disseminate information on abhorrent crimes, including sexual violence in zones of armed conflict, in order to raise local awareness and knowledge about the legal consequences of crimes.

Recognizing the fact that the consequences of violence against women and girls in conflict zones has a serious impact on physical and mental health and are of a sensitive nature, my delegation would strongly like to recommend a more vigorous expansion of the role and contribution of women in field-based operations, especially among humanitarian personnel, including medical staff.

We must nevertheless recognize that understanding about the magnitude of the problem of security and the protection of women and girls in conflict zones has been growing thanks to resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/567) on women and peace and security, as well as the efforts of the United Nations system to implement resolution 1325 (2000) at all levels. Addressing sexual violations in armed conflict is not the responsibility of a given country or region alone, but a humanitarian imperative for every stakeholder. The side to a conflict that encourages the violence must be strongly condemned.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the full and successful implementation of the resolution by all Member States will help to significantly increase protection for women's and girls' rights and dignity in zones of armed conflict, as well as to eliminate such crimes, including sexual abuses.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, and Secretary of State Rice for convening this timely and important meeting, which, in my delegation's view, is crucial and necessary at a time when women and other vulnerable groups have become the main victims of armed conflict.

Women's advancement, security and living conditions in Iraq had declined during the past three decades. Wars and economic sanctions and negligence and oppression by the former regime had eroded conditions for women. There had been systematic breaches of human rights, in particular against women, who were subject to gender-specific abuse and violence. In the past few years, thousands of Iraqi women lost their lives and suffered from terrorist acts, which have targeted the most vulnerable groups in society, namely, children, women and the elderly. More recently, terrorist groups have been recruiting and using Iraqi women to commit suicidal attacks against civilians. According to statistics, about 17 women have committed such acts. Terrorists have even used women with mental disabilities to commit suicidal attacks in a market crowded with women and children.

With regard to the new Iraq, equality between women and men and protection against discrimination were enshrined in the Transitional Administrative Law and in the new Iraqi constitution that has been adopted. However, violence against women is rooted in some traditional practices and tribal codes, and is compounded by the socio-economic and security situation in the country.

Throughout the difficulties the country has faced, Iraqi women have shown resilience, courage and determination. For the past few years, they have been playing a larger and more effective role, as they are part of the political process in the new Iraq. They hold no less than 25 per cent of parliamentary and provincial council seats.

They have recently become more empowered, with the creation of the cross-party women's caucus composed of 73 women members of parliament. In a joint effort with United Nations agencies, that party will advance the development of policies to help victims of conflict, including widows, orphans, the families of war victims and Iraqi refugees. The establishment of the cross-party women's caucus will enable Iraqi women members of parliament to emerge as more effective and influential actors in the legislature, by bridging different viewpoints held by the various parties to which they belong.

For the first time, Iraqi women have also been playing an effective role as ministers of important ministries, including those responsible for human rights, municipalities and public works, women, housing and construction and the environment.

I should also mention that the country has for the first time experienced the establishment of women's organizations, through which Iraqi women have proven their capabilities in defeating challenges by taking on difficult responsibilities on different levels. Those organizations have been playing an important role in advancing and empowering women in Iraq. My country is going through the phase of institutional reconstruction, and my Government realizes that without the effective participation and full role of

women, many of the long-term goals will not be achieved.

Iraq's current political situation provides an opportunity to redress persistent violations of women's rights, as the Iraqi constitution will be further amended as part of the political process. It will open space to continue to influence the process of addressing women's rights and promoting gender equality as part of Iraq's institutional rebuilding. It is anticipated that 60 laws will be either revised or formulated, as stipulated in Iraq's new constitution, providing an unprecedented opportunity to influence further the constitution and legislation and to align them with international conventions — in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which my Government recently ratified.

The Government of Iraq, in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, is implementing programmes and projects to promote the role of women by strengthening the role of civil society organizations in mitigating violence and by contributing to building peace in Iraq. Support for that effort is provided in line with the framework of resolution 1325 (2000), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

That partnership also includes capacity-building for women's non-governmental organizations to promote women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict mitigation.

Another programme implemented in Iraq by various United Nations agencies involves disseminating knowledge on emerging issues and innovative solutions towards conflict resolution and increasing tolerance, in order to enhance the capacity of community groups and women's non-governmental organizations that promote the culture of peace and foster dialogue among various groups.

As we are discussing sexual violence and rape as war crimes under international law, my delegation is of the view that such crimes against women should be considered as crimes against humanity, as those actions cannot find a place in any culture and should not be excused under any circumstances.

Eight years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Its purpose was to address the atrocities committed against women and girls during conflicts and even after peace agreements and in post-conflict situations. We agree that since the adoption of that resolution, progress towards reaching its main goals has been slow.

We believe that one of the major problems facing our endeavours to stop these crimes is the issue of shame and the social exclusion of victims. Since we are discussing the issue of data collection on rape and sexual violence, we believe that due consideration should be given to cultural differences and to awareness-raising campaigns undertaken with the help of community leaders in post-conflict situations, in particular among the most vulnerable groups in society.

Preventing and eliminating these atrocities must be the main goal of our endeavours, and to achieve that goal we must act globally. We commend the efforts of the United Nations in that regard, but we call upon all relevant United Nations agencies, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, civil society and non-governmental organizations to combine their efforts to combat these crimes and to establish early warning mechanisms to enable the international community to prevent these crimes from taking place.

We also believe that an end must be put to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes and that they should be held accountable for their actions.

To conclude, we would like to express our full support for an action-oriented resolution that will put an end to these crimes and atrocities against women and girls, and my delegation hopes that this important debate will bring this issue to the world's attention and make it globally recognized.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to participate in this open debate on women and peace and security and wishes to express our appreciation to the delegation of the United States for organizing the debate. We also commend the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-

General, the Deputy Secretary-General, His Excellency the Liberian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Major-General Cammaert for their briefings.

Throughout history, gender-based violence, in particular violence against women, has a component of armed conflict. In Rwanda, the 1994 genocide was marked by horrific forms of violence, particularly against girls and women. An estimated 500,000 girls and women were victims of rape by the Interahamwe, and up to two thirds of those victims were also infected with HIV by perpetrators carrying the virus. It is now evident that rape was part of the genocidal plan and part of the systematic degradation of women and of girls. This plan was then exported by members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe across our borders into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and continues to be exacted by the ex-FAR/Interahamwe, under its new denomination the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD-Urunana) and other militias on the women and girls of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Fourteen years on, survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda continue to live with the effects of that legacy.

Therefore, addressing the specific protection needs of women in armed conflict remains a critical matter for the United Nations system. My delegation therefore reiterates its support for the continued implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

It is within that context that my Government has set out to elaborate a national policy on gender-based violence and violence against women. The development of that policy is situated within a national, regional and international context and is linked to peacebuilding and economic development and growth. Article II of the Rwanda genocide law stipulates that gender-based violence, violence against women and sexual violence must be dealt with in the first category under article I, as a crime of genocide or crime against humanity, punishable under article 95 of the penal code with a maximum term of life imprisonment.

Rwanda, as one of the major troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations, has a vested interest in ensuring the protection of women in situations of armed conflict. Gender-based violence and violence against women are therefore considered by the Rwanda Defence Forces as a key component of the security threat. In that respect, the gender desk at Rwanda Defence Forces headquarters devises training programmes, with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), to raise awareness of gender-based violence and violence against women in the armed forces. Awareness and training on responding to gender-based violence and violence against women has now been mainstreamed into the curricula of all Rwanda's military schools and training institutions and is integral to the preparation of all Rwanda Defence Forces battalions preparing for peace missions abroad. The leadership of the Rwanda Defence Forces has also undertaken the fight against gender-based violence and violence against women as a command responsibility.

My delegation therefore calls upon the United Nations system to take concerted action on addressing the plight of women in armed conflict through enforcing resolution 1325 (2000), rejecting impunity through support to and strengthening of national jurisdictions and the provision of support to victims of sexual violence.

We also strongly believe that in order for the United Nations system to respond in a more coordinated, coherent and effective manner, urgent attention needs to be placed on strengthening the United Nations system's work on gender.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Cato (Philippines): The Philippines would like to begin by congratulating the United States and commending it for having convened this debate on the important issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. We thank you, Mr. President, for giving the Philippines the opportunity to address the Council on this issue.

The Philippines joins previous speakers in condemning acts of sexual violence inflicted on women and girls by parties involved in armed conflict. Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is something to which the international community should not close its eyes. As we speak, reports on how women and girls have found themselves victims of sexual violence and on how they remain vulnerable to increased risk of violence from parties involved in armed conflicts

continue to stream in from various hotspots around the world.

The sexual abuse committed against women and girls is deeply rooted in a pervasive culture of discrimination, highlighted by the unequal power equation which denies females equal status. This inequality is manifested in a number of ways during conflict, particularly through the social, political and cultural norms that identify women and girls not only as the property of men, but also as sexual objects. This inequality also finds form as a tool of war, with violence directed at women being considered an attack against the values and honour of a society.

While it is easy to see the vulnerabilities of women, there is a tendency to regard them only as victims of violence, most especially sexual violence. Unfortunately, this obscures the many positive roles that women play in conflict situations, especially as agents of peace and reconciliation, as called for under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

The Philippines continues to regard resolution 1325 (2000) as an important contribution by the Security Council to addressing the complex issues affecting women in countries torn by conflict. Resolution 1325 (2000) is an instrument that brings a United Nations gender perspective to conflict analysis, monitoring and resolution. This has had a great impact on the transformative responses that are needed to address the gender dimension of conflict.

The fundamental strategy of the Philippines in pursuing the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) lies in enabling more women to systematically participate in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding, while at the same time rehabilitating their communities and ensuring basic services and livelihoods. Women are empowered to take part in local peace processes by building capacities and mobilizing peace constituencies. Women in indigenous communities, for instance, are even serving as intermediaries in local peace dialogues and as mediators in the restoration of broken peace pacts. The roles that women play in addressing the issues surrounding them are critical; therefore, the Philippines remains convinced that women must be utilized as active agents in confronting gender-based violence.

The response to sexual exploitation in conflict situations necessitates a comprehensive approach. As this entails a response which should address the various dimensions of the problem, the United Nations must mobilize the entities within its system and build on their comparative advantages to address the root causes, manifestations and consequences of conflict.

The Philippines recognizes the role of the Security Council in addressing conflict in its various dimensions, including the gender dimension, to the extent that this is in accordance with the Council's mandate. It should be emphasized that, since the issue of sexual violence requires a more holistic response, including political, economic, social and cultural aspects, the Security Council's actions, which comprise only part of the response, must be coherently coordinated with the efforts of other bodies, such as the development-oriented agencies.

The Philippines also wishes to underscore the importance of the regional context in assessing and addressing conflict, as well as in coming up with the appropriate responses to the gender dimensions of conflicts. In this connection, the Philippines urges the Security Council to work closely with the relevant regional intergovernmental and civil society organizations in areas of conflict.

While the Philippines recognizes the need to urgently confront sexual violence in conflict, it believes that the Security Council must also exercise caution to ensure that it does not confront the conflict situation narrowly by focusing on palliatives to address the issue of gender violence. As sexual violence is part of the bigger context of conflict, the Security Council must see to it that it also uses its mandate mainly to assess and address this broader picture. Bearing in mind the need to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted measures and sanctions, the Security Council must be cognizant that these, if contemplated, must not exacerbate the conflict or give rise to negative consequences for the civilian population.

The Security Council can concretely contribute to gender-sensitive conflict prevention and resolution, including post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, by taking the necessary steps to put an end to impunity by going after all violators without exception. This could also be accomplished by integrating gender issues in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, incorporating

the necessary gender training in the security sector and facilitating the establishment of necessary infrastructure and capacity for women's access to justice, as well as cooperative work with non-governmental organizations and other community groups.

To further address the issue of sexual violence, the Security Council could support systems for gender-sensitive monitoring of conflicts, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data and information with the engagement of national and local authorities. This is important to facilitate national ownership and accountability. The Security Council could also advocate for the inclusion of gender violence issues in peace accords and peace processes between parties to conflict.

The Philippines believes that the Security Council can help address the issue of gender violence in conflict areas by seeing to it that the design and training of peacekeeping missions include the deployment of more female police and military personnel, the necessary gender-sensitivity training by troop-contributing countries and the enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeepers.

In the case of the Philippines, gender sensitivity is incorporated in the predeployment training for personnel of our armed forces and our national police whom we send out to support United Nations peacekeeping operations. As early as four years ago, the Philippines had put in place a zero-tolerance policy on misconduct, especially on sexual exploitation and abuse that could be committed by our peacekeepers. This policy of zero tolerance, which is firmly embedded in the revised policy framework and guidelines governing Philippine participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, serves as a guarantee that no Filipino peacekeeper will go unpunished for misdeeds committed in mission areas.

Finally, the Philippines, as one of the largest contributors, if not the largest contributor, of individual police officers to United Nations peacekeeping operations, could also support calls for the deployment of more female police officers, especially those experienced in handling gender violence cases. We hope that such a contribution would help to bring about better monitoring, reporting and response to cases of gender violence in conflict areas.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): At the outset, I would like to thank the United States for having organized this open debate on a very important protection gap, that related to sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations.

In situations of armed conflict and periods of instability, armed groups often use violence against civilians, especially women, as a deliberate tactic of war. In Afghanistan, the devastating impacts of three decades of armed conflict have particularly affected the most vulnerable part of our population, namely women and children. During this period, the basic rights of Afghan women have been undermined, even denied, due to the vicious cycles of violence which allowed groups with power to act with impunity in the face of women's vulnerability. Under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was a graveyard for human and women's rights, where barbaric atrocities against women constantly occurred. No one can forget the images of innocent Afghan women being slaughtered in Kabul's stadium and the images of the inhuman Taliban bludgeoning women in the street for so-called unvirtuous behaviour. Today the results of widespread violence during years of conflict are still affecting the private and public spheres of women's lives in Afghanistan.

In several armed conflict situations, acts of sexual and gender-based violence have been used to humiliate and forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group. In Afghanistan, sexual violence was not a predominant method employed by armed groups in conflict, due to the strong cultural bounds within our society. However, sexual violence was used by some individuals and groups as an instrument of war.

Afghanistan recognizes that sexual and gender-based violence is a threat to international peace and security and condemns all sexual and gender-based violence committed against civilians in conflict-affected situations. We would also like to acknowledge that, in countries in armed conflict as well as in post-conflict countries, violence against women has multiple dimensions that extend beyond a sexual nature.

It has been eight years since the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325 (2000) and about seven years since the fall of the barbaric regime of the

Taliban and the beginning of the peace process, democratization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Our vision is a peaceful and progressive nation where women and men enjoy security, equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of life.

The Government of Afghanistan has made considerable achievements in protecting women from violence and in ensuring a secure environment where their rights are protected and their participation in decision-making bodies and in the peacebuilding process is guaranteed. The fact that 28 per cent of the seats in the Afghan Assembly are held by women is testament to this claim. This places Afghanistan as the twentieth-ranked country in the world in terms of female representation in parliament.

Afghanistan has undertaken several initiatives in addressing violence against women, as embodied in its constitution, the Millennium Development Goals, the Afghanistan Compact, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy that was recently launched in Paris, and international treaties. The Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs is leading our efforts in achieving this goal and chairs the ministerial task force created in 2005 to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all relevant organizations, including United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Development Fund for Women, as well as to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, for assisting us in advancing the status of Afghan women.

Progress in the process that involves the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and the disbanding of illegal armed groups has contributed to minimizing violence against civilians, particularly women and children. However, the successful completion of this process will help to create an environment where women will be empowered to exercise their rights.

The Afghan Government recognizes that security sector reform is crucial to strengthening the rule of law, to ensuring the protection of women's rights, to improving law enforcement bodies and to ending the culture of impunity.

But at the same time, we would like to underscore the need for women to participate in the security sector reform process. In this regard, initial steps have been taken by the Ministry of the Interior to increase the recruitment of female law enforcement officers and to provide gender sensitivity training in the police academy. Police family response units are staffed by women who are trained to deal with domestic violence and to respond to female victims of crime.

The escalation of violence and insecurity in some parts of the country as a result of the terrorist activities carried out by the Taliban and Al-Qaida hinders the implementation of the rule of law and consequently makes women vulnerable to all forms of violence. Various methods of violence against women are used by the Taliban and Al-Qaida to intimidate, terrorize and force Afghan women to retreat from public activities and limit their access to health care, education, justice and economic and social endeavours, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. The terrorist campaign of the Taliban and Al-Qaida has particularly affected girls' school enrolment and attendance. Schools are burned, and female teachers and students are attacked and threatened.

The legacy of the long conflict, including access to weapons, difficulty in stabilization efforts and rampant poverty, is reflected in some parts of the country in self-immolation, forced marriage, domestic and other forms of violence. In order to be successful in our efforts to eliminate these practices, we request the international community to continue its assistance so that we may strengthen our national capacity in ensuring a secure environment, improving economic and social conditions and implementing human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

The protection of civilians, including women, is highlighted as an inherent part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force mission operating in Afghanistan. We would like to emphasize on the need to integrate specific strategies for the better protection of women from all forms of violence, including sexual violence. We also encourage peacekeeping forces to receive predeployment gender sensitivity training.

Sustainable peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the participation of half of its population, namely Afghan women. Afghanistan recognizes the importance of the positive contribution of women to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and the promotion of peace and security. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon justly stated this morning, the

most effective way to combat violence against women is to make women messengers of peace instead of victims of violence. That reflects our vision for Afghan women.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador welcomes the initiative to hold an open Security Council debate on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. That resolution is a cornerstone of the call for full and equal participation of women in all peace and security initiatives, together with mainstreaming the gender perspective in the context of armed conflict, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and also in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

The resolution emphasizes the need to increase the role of women in the political participation process and in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

El Salvador's post-conflict situation enables us to confirm that women and men experience peace and conflict in different ways and that, therefore, they have different vulnerabilities and needs and require different mechanisms to address their security.

Thus, in the context of armed conflict and in peacebuilding processes, we may wonder whether gender roles and relations differ, since men and women adapt to changes in situations according to circumstances. Resolution 1325 (2000) is thus a landmark which enables us to consider the increasing complexity of conflict situations and the transition from conflict to development in a broad and integral manner and from a gender perspective.

El Salvador recognizes that since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, limited progress has been made in implementing it. The results have been mixed, as confirmed by studies carried out by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, particularly the study entitled "Securing Equality, Engendering Peace: A guide to policy and planning on women, peace and security". It should be noted that this study helps facilitate the development of national action plans that are realistic and effective in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) through good practices, specific recommendations and a six-step process.

Additionally, as the debate on the gender perspective in the context of armed conflict continues, related problems come to light, such as a lack of prevention and protection, in particular for women and girls, from violence of all kinds, including sexual violence, which unfortunately is, in some cases, used as a weapon of war.

In this connection, my delegation joins other delegations and civil society organizations in requesting the Secretary-General to systematically include full information on acts of sexual violence and gender-based acts against women and girls in all reports on conflict situations.

El Salvador recognizes the need to broaden the framework of action derived from the promotion of a holistic approach to the issue of the gender perspective in the context of armed conflict and transitional and peacebuilding situations. However, we are aware that in progressing along this path, we are liable sometimes to duplicate the functions of other principal organs of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, both of which have specific mandates to deal with these matters under the Charter.

In that light, further efforts should be made to ensure coordination and cooperation among the principal organs of the United Nations in order to tackle these issues in an holistic manner while avoiding overlaps in the mandates and functions of each organ.

Thus, in El Salvador's view, the special position of the Peacebuilding Commission, deriving from its organic link with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, make it, in a way, the proper forum for promoting and assessing on the ground the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in a broad-based and holistic manner.

In concluding, allow me to restate the political will of the Government of El Salvador to continue making progress in the promotion and implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and in strengthening the political participation of women in decision-making processes which will ensure that women become active players in their own development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific small island developing

States, comprising Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your strong leadership in convening this open debate. We share the concerns raised in the presidential statement of October 2007 (S/PRST/2007/40), wherein the Security Council condemned all acts of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict committed against women and girls, including killing, maiming, and sexual violence and abuse. We commend the work that Security Council has done in addressing gender-based violence with the adoption of resolutions 1325 (2000) and with the more recent adoption of resolutions 1468 (2003), 1493 (2003) and 1590 (2005).

Gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict is a violation of women's basic human rights. It is also a concern raised by the Secretary-General in his report containing an in-depth study on all forms of violence against women published in 2006 (A/61/122/Add.1). The report recognized that there are many forms and manifestations of violence against women in a wide range of settings, including the family, the community, State custody and institutions, armed conflict and refugee and internally displaced persons situations. The Secretary-General emphasized that

> "violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, it cuts across both the public and the private sphere and one form of violence often reinforces another." (*A/61/122/Add.1, para. 365*)

What we are seeing in some parts of the world is the use of rape and sexual assault as systematic war tactics in destroying the cohesion of communities. In some cases, women who were raped or sexually assaulted during situations of armed conflict face rejection by their families and communities. They are often ostracized and left to fend for themselves. These women face debilitating poverty and discrimination, and many subsequently fall into the vicious cycle of further exploitation and abuse by working in the sex trade; many are exposed to the danger of human trafficking.

In the light of women caught in situations of armed conflict, we urge the Security Council to recognize gender-based violence as a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. We recommend that, where appropriate, the Security Council systematically monitor incidents of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. Furthermore, we recommend that, where appropriate, the Secretary-General systematically include comprehensive information on gender-based violence in his reports on conflict-affected situations and that he prepare a special report to the Security Council with timely information on sexual and gender-based violence, thereby initiating the process of follow-up for the Security Council and United Nations agencies.

We congratulate the sponsoring countries for taking the initiative to put forth today's draft resolution, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding and highlights the fact that violence, intimidation and discrimination may erode women's legitimacy and their capacity to participate in post-conflict public life, reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding processes.

In our efforts to support the victims of sexual and gender-based violence, we must provide women with psychological care to help them achieve long-term stability.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of taking a preventive attitude towards sexual and gender-based violence and other factors that may endanger the security of women. Sexual and gender-based violence does not occur in a vacuum. Unfavourable political, social, cultural, economic and environmental exerts pressure and therefore reinforce existing vulnerabilities and gender inequalities.

It is important for the Security Council to address cross-cutting issues such as climate change in relation to women's security. Climate change is an emerging cross-cutting issue with serious security implications. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its fourth assessment report, highlights the vulnerabilities of developing countries and states that poor communities are especially vulnerable due to limited adaptive capacities and are more dependent on climate-sensitive resources.

Women and children account for an estimated 70 per cent of the world's poorest population. Women

in developing countries are responsible for an estimated 45 to 80 per cent of household food production. Women are arguably much more dependent upon agriculture for their livelihoods and survival. Thus far, the effects of climate change are mostly likely to erode women's capacity to provide for themselves and their families, due to the loss of their livelihoods.

It is important to recognize gender differences not just in terms of differential vulnerability but also as differential capacity to adapt and to mitigate the effects of climate change. Climate change is not gender-neutral; rather, gender is an important determinant in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The lack of provisions for integrating a gender perspective into adaptation and mitigation strategies will seriously threaten the security of women. Women need to be empowered economically and must receive training and capacity-building to better adapt to the effects of climate change. It is also imperative to increase grassroots assistance to women in their efforts to preserve their livelihoods.

The link between climate change, the security of women and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict is closer than one would expect. The developing world is facing more exogenous threats and risk factors than ever before. During the Food Security Forum in April this year, the Food and Agriculture Organization warned that long-term food insecurity would lead to the chronic undernourishment of the world's poor. An estimated 850 million people worldwide suffer from hunger, and the number is likely to increase by 4 million each year. Experts at the Forum cautioned that without proper mitigation and adaptation strategies and resources to implement such strategies, many developing countries will see their coping capacity diminish over time. The loss of arable land, the increased frequency of natural disasters, weakened infrastructure, increases in epidemic diseases, population displacements, the increase in poverty and competition for natural resources are drivers of conflict.

Since nearly one third of the world's poorest population live in countries that are fragile or conflict-affected, they will also be the ones most likely to be affected by or to engage in resource wars — armed conflicts over the use of natural resources, including oil, water and arable land. In a recent interview, António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, reinforced the likelihood of the situation as he explained that climate change could also uproot people by provoking armed conflicts over increasingly scarce resources.

Such conflicts will have a devastating impact on developing countries, and it is very likely that women will be exposed to physical and psychological harm and sexual and gender-based violence. We therefore urge the Security Council to take a preventive approach in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence by considering climate change as a threat to women's security and to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Prica (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, let me commend you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on such an important issue as women and peace and security.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement already delivered by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia on behalf of European Union. At the same time, I would like to add some points reflecting our own national activities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina recognizes the importance of resolution 1325 (2000) and will continue to work towards its full implementation. We welcome the advances that have been made in this area by the United Nations system and Member States since the historic adoption of the resolution, eight years ago. Generally speaking, we can clearly see from the Secretary-General's reports that the United Nations has supported the systematization and institutionalization of efforts to strengthen action in solving the gender problem; but the work is still far from done. We have to ensure that the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) are implemented completely and that women can fully participate at all levels of decision-making. We must also strengthen the status of women in all fields.

We are very concerned at the fact that systematic sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflicts has been, and still is, used as a war strategy and that it remains a direct threat to international peace and security. Speaking from our own experience from the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly condemns all acts of violence against women and girls in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. From the very

beginning, therefore, Bosnia and Herzegovina sponsored and supported General Assembly resolution 62/134, entitled "Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations", which was adopted on 18 December 2007.

Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to launch a multi-year global campaign with the goal of bringing together the United Nations, Governments and civil society to end violence against women.

Two years ago, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a five-year gender action plan incorporating the main provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). Much has been achieved in the area of adopting appropriate legislation on the protection of civilian victims of war. The law now gives women victims the status of civilian victims of war and helps them on their path towards full reintegration into the community, giving them a chance for professional improvement and providing them with monthly allowances and medical and psycho-social assistance. Under the plan, expert teams have been established to engage in analysis, provide legal assistance to victims and conduct workshops on the basis of, among other things, sharing lessons learned.

In addition to the Government's activities, the non-governmental sector is successfully involved in improving the situation regarding the issue. A very good example is that of a project carried out by the non-governmental sector that has established a database of women victims in my country. In spite of society's traditional attitude towards women victims, 3,000 women have already been inscribed on this database, which remains open. Privacy is guaranteed, and all women were granted long-term financial aid.

Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly believes that women should be more involved in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding in post-conflict situations and the promotion of sustainable peace. However, women still need considerable support and capacity-building to be effective in today's society, which traditionally has been dominated by men.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina's full commitment to close cooperation with the States Members of the United Nations in the comprehensive implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

Mr. Lamamra: On behalf of the Commission of the African Union (AU), I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to join previous speakers in commending the United States presidency of the Council and Secretary Rice for organizing this open debate on the crucial question of women and peace and security.

I wish to say how honoured I am to address a formal meeting of the Council for the first time in my new capacity as the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. Indeed, I feel fortunate that I am assuming office in a climate of increasing cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations, and with the Security Council in particular. I am confident that we will continue to strengthen our relations as we move forward.

The protection and empowerment of women is indeed one of the founding principles of the African Union, as enshrined in our Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council and other instruments of the African Union. As Council members are aware, the Adoption of the protocol on the rights of women to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and of the declaration on gender equality, adopted following the historic presidential debate of the Assembly of the African Union in 2005, were important milestones in that respect.

A clear vision and mandate on the issue of women and peace and security in the continent have thus been established in the African Union, which stresses gender parity at all levels of our organization. We continue to develop the necessary instruments and the operational environment for their implementation, as an integral part of our overall agenda for a peaceful, united and prosperous Africa.

Furthermore, our regional economic communities, African women and civil society organizations have been the driving forces behind our efforts and achievements, and we are committed to continue to strengthen efforts towards addressing the

well-known range of challenges of peace and security for women and for our peoples as a whole.

We therefore welcome the seriousness with which the Security Council continues to address this question, which also ranks high on the list of priorities of the African Union. In that connection, we have launched the preparatory process for the convening of an important conference on women in post-conflict reconstruction and development, to be held in 2009.

I would now like to focus on the theme of today's debate: on some of the opportunities and challenges which lie on the path ahead, from the peace and security perspective in particular.

First, we have been greatly honoured by the leadership and important contributions of women in recent peace processes in Africa, such as in Mozambique, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in ongoing efforts for lasting peace and security in the Sudan and Somalia. I should, however, like to underscore the need to strengthen the involvement of women in such processes in the future. Indeed, the efforts of the international community on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related instruments have made possible a deeper understanding of the centrality of the gender perspective in the maintenance of international peace and security. The wide range of issues involved, such as the specific challenges facing women in armed conflict situations and sexual slavery and abuse, are now well known. We must take concrete actions in ensuring that the knowledge gained thus far is fully integrated in the new and emerging era of closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations for the maintenance of international peace and security. That includes the participation of women in peacekeeping operations at all levels. The coordination of efforts between the United Nations and the African Union would be crucial in that aspect.

Secondly, we in the African Union face the challenge of ensuring that our emerging peace and security architecture, which includes the African standby force, the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise and our subregional arrangements for peace and security, adequately reflect our vision on women and peace and security. We are determined to address this challenge and continue to count on the support of the Security Council and our international partners in that respect.

Furthermore, the ongoing efforts for the reform of United Nations, and of Security Council in particular, also offer an excellent opportunity to address this crucial question, through adequate representation and participation of regions, such as Africa, that are facing serious peace and security challenges for women and for their nations as a whole, due to persistent conflict situations. We also believe that the elevation of the United Nations mandate on gender equality to the highest possible level within the Secretariat could be a major step towards addressing the issue of gender equality as a whole, and we call on the Security Council to encourage the efforts of the Secretary-General on this question.

Finally, as part of ongoing efforts towards strengthening the mobilization of resources and support for international peace and security, I would like to underscore the importance of ensuring that efforts centred on women and peace and security are adequately supported by the entire international community.

With those few remarks, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the African Union to our cooperation with the United Nations and with our international partners on this matter and other questions, and I wish every success for this timely and important open debate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Than Swe (Myanmar): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to take part in today's open debate. The issues of women and of peace and security are issues of particular importance for my country.

The need to prevent armed conflict and to bring to a speedy conclusion situations of armed conflict cannot be overemphasized. Resolution 1325 (2000) calls for all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of sexual abuses and to end impunity whenever such dastardly crimes are perpetrated. In situations of armed conflict, the most vulnerable among the population include women and girls. Therefore, we firmly believe that tackling the root causes of conflict, which include disunity, poverty, socio-economic and gender inequality and underdevelopment, is extremely important.

Myanmar fully supports a zero-tolerance policy with regard to violence against women and girls. Myanmar's traditions, culture and values strongly favour our efforts to promote gender equality. They also contribute strongly to the Government's endeavours to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. In order to promote and protect the rights of women and girls, the Government established the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs in 1996 as a national mechanism to carry out the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 2003, in order to comprehensively carry out the measures laid out by the National Committee, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation was formed. One of the key areas actively dealt with by those organizations is violence against women.

My delegation has repeatedly stressed here that the best way to protect civilians, particularly women and children, in armed conflict is to put a speedy end to such conflict. We also believe that national reconciliation is the only way to end conflict in a speedy manner. My country experienced the devastating effects of an insurgency that raged in our country for over 40 years. It is only recently that, owing to the national reconciliation policy of my Government, we have emerged from a conflict situation and are able to put a virtual end to the insurgencies that had ravaged the country for so long.

Currently, 17 out of 18 major insurgent groups have come back to the legal fold. With regard to the remaining Karen National Union (KNU) insurgent group, its two main factions have opted for peace, leaving only a small remnant of the KNU and former narco-trafficking armed groups outside the legal fold. Peace and stability now prevail in almost all corners of Myanmar. That has resulted in significant improvements in the daily life of civilians, in particular women and children.

My delegation joins the rest of the international community in its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of all sexual and other forms of violence committed against civilians in armed conflict, particularly women and children. We must work together to prevent such violence. Here, I wish to stress the importance of avoiding the politicization of this important issue. Sexual violence as a weapon of war must be strongly condemned. In the same vein, fabricating allegations and using disinformation as a weapon of political pressure warrant strong condemnation.

My delegation therefore takes exception to the unfounded allegations regarding sexual violence levelled against the Myanmar armed forces. We categorically reject them. The allegations levelled at the Myanmar military come from groups associated with the insurgents. Failing in their attempt to topple the Government by force of arms, they have embarked upon a disinformation campaign by fabricating allegations. The Security Council has had first-hand experience showing that reports emanating from exiles are at variance with reality.

Rape is regarded by Myanmar people and Government as a most dastardly and abhorrent crime. Whenever such a crime is committed, we make sure that the full force of law is applied against the perpetrators. Whenever there are allegations, investigations are carried out by the authorities and organizations concerned, including the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation; where there were genuine cases, perpetrators were prosecuted and given sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment.

Rape and any other form of sexual violence are unlawful in any circumstance and in all places. They are also an offense against the dignity and integrity of the victims. The international community, national Governments and the United Nations system must all work together to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to take this opportunity to convey to Ms. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States, my sincere congratulations on her country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to thank her for having taken the initiative to organize this debate on a topic that is as important as it is topical and which calls for a response from the entire international community.

I also welcome the participation of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, and many ministers this morning. The active and involved participation in this debate of so many delegations of Member States

reflects the primary interest that we all attach to issues of peace and security and to the central role of women in achieving this and in achieving the ideals of our universal organization. But it also highlights the role that we must play in order to promote women's rights in general and to protect and provide care for the victims of the horrors and brutalities of conflict in particular.

While it is understood today that the international community must make greater efforts to promote the status and rights of women and to take appropriate action in that context, even more so must we protect them during times of conflict. Violence against women is, by definition, a dehumanizing and unacceptable practice and an abject violation of basic human rights. Such practices must be fought and forcefully punished.

The efforts made to that end by the United Nations and its Member States can only be praised and encouraged. However, reports issued by the United Nations and its specialized agencies give us alarming statistics on the treatment of women and on their sufferings and call upon us to redouble our efforts to put an end, once and for all, to the violence and abuses committed against women. We should recall, in this context, that at the 2005 World Summit our heads of State or Government reaffirmed the importance of protecting civilians, particularly women, in conflict and post-conflict situations. They also emphasized the need to promote women's rights as an essential precondition for peace, security and development worldwide.

The international community possesses an impressive legal arsenal for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and for protecting them as a vital force in every society. It is thus up to us to ensure rigorous implementation of the provisions of the relevant international legal documents and instruments, and to ensure that women in our societies, particularly those affected by war and conflict, finally benefit from the protection and attention that they deserve in order to bring about lasting peace and stability in our world.

Today's debate makes it incumbent upon us to make a collective commitment to ensure that women, wherever they are, are no longer vulnerable, are no longer placed in an inferior position and are no longer exposed to discrimination, threats or terror. In this framework, our civilizations must choose to genuinely participate in the global move towards ensuring that women get the place and role that they deserve in today's societies as full-fledged citizens, partners benefiting from equal opportunities and holders of responsibilities in all sectors and at all levels. This is, of course, a blueprint for a civilized society where women are a guarantee of modernity, a vehicle for development, a guarantor of political stability, and especially a preventive security shield against any obscurantist and retrograde tendencies — in other words, the spearhead of a society mobilized for progress and prosperity.

That, in any case, was the path taken in promoting the status of women in Tunisia, launched immediately after Tunisia achieved its independence in 1956, with the adoption of a personal status code. This is one of the basic pillars of the new plan for our society that is being undertaken by independent Tunisia thanks in large part to the reformist revival brought to our country by President Ben Ali. The principle of gender equality under the law was thereby enshrined and women were given a position at the forefront of the social and political modernization of the country. This has secured the position of Tunisian women in political life, making them an essential component of society and an effective, genuine agent of progress and stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates the United States of America on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We are particularly pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over this public debate.

If there is one area where the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) leaves most to be desired, it is that of the many forms of unconscionable violence and abuse which parties to armed conflict continue to inflict against women and young girls. This situation is in complete contravention of international standards. The most heinous and most traumatizing form of abuse against women is sexual violence. The seriousness of this abominable phenomenon is multiplied when it is perpetrated on a large scale. But all of that still does not compare to the use of mass rape as a weapon of war or as an instrument for ethnic cleansing or outright genocide.

The international community must acquire the means to gain access to the lawless regions where such

crimes are committed and must carry out investigations of reported cases. In this context, the Council should be able to order special operations, by virtue of the principle of the responsibility to protect, in order to establish and document the involvement of armed groups committing sexual violence against women. Such investigations would aim also to determine the nature and the scope of the action to be taken to put an end to these criminal practices.

Synergy should also be established between the activities of human rights advisers, where they are deployed, and the monitoring and information mechanism established within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005), which was initiated by my country, Benin. This mechanism has been proven itself: it has enabled us to identify the perpetrators of abuse against children in situations of armed conflict.

Strengthening the legal provisions to fight impunity would be of great use, because the credibility of these provisions could serve as a deterrent to the parties to conflict. The International Criminal Court has a crucial role to play in this context.

At the same time, we must put an end to the stigmatization of women who are victims of rape and give them back their dignity by organizing awareness-raising campaigns and by establishing structures for psychological rehabilitation. This type of assistance to victims and to communities affected by armed conflict should be taken into account in the mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

In general terms, protection against sexual violence is an essential aspect of protecting civilians. United Nations missions should analyse such violence in order to define the concrete measures that can be taken to prevent sexual attacks. It nearly goes without saying that the deployment of women in the contingents would make the fight against sexual violence more effective because it could facilitate contact and the gathering of sensitive information. But the absence of women in these contingents should not impede the development of effective strategies to counter this phenomenon.

While amnesty for warlords is often the price to pay in concluding peace accords, it is important to ensure that serious crimes not be covered up, as long as they are properly documented. These crimes should be made imprescriptible worldwide so that those who are suspected of having committed such crimes may be brought to account as soon as possible in an international or national jurisdiction as appropriate.

That said, we must enhance the awareness of law enforcement agencies on the issue of sexual violence to ensure that they effectively protect the population, because it is not rare for all parties to an armed conflict to be guilty of serious crimes against civilian populations — who are just as fearful of Government forces as of rebel forces.

The fight against sexual exploitation attributed to members of peacekeeping operations must be intensified. We must act more preventively than we have by improving the awareness of contingent members before they are deployed.

Care for victims of sexual violence is best provided by women and by women's civil society organizations. They should regard this as a field of action in which they have a clear comparative advantage. Their participation in negotiations to conclude and implement peace accords and to establish truth and reconciliation bodies would be an additional guarantee of the mainstreaming of gender-specific issues. They could also help to ensure that effective prevention policies are adopted.

In this context, my delegation believes that it is entirely appropriate for the Security Council to adopt a resolution on this issue on the basis of the draft text (S/2008/403) circulated by the United States as part of the preparations for this public debate. This initiative, as a whole, has the support of my delegation.

Last year, it was an honour for Benin to have contributed to bringing about consensus in the General Assembly on the resolution on rape (General Assembly resolution 62/134) that was initiated by the United States. The Security Council's adoption of this new draft resolution will give the United Nations the tools to ensure better monitoring of zones of conflict with a view to better protecting civilians.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Hadrami (Mauritania) (*spoke in French*): Owing to the lateness of the hour, I will be brief.

At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on having organized this important meeting on women and peace and security: sexual violence in situations of

armed conflict. I would also like to congratulate the United States Secretary of State, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, and the other ministers for their outstanding statements and for having given them some of their time to this important debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the particular attention they are devoting to combating sexual violence against women in armed conflict.

The presence this morning of a great number of ministers from States members of the Security Council was a sign of the importance that the Council attaches to this issue, because sexual violence can, to varying degrees, pose a threat to international peace and security.

In this respect, I would add the voice of Mauritania to the chorus of those who have preceded us to condemn the degrading and inhuman treatment inflicted upon women through sexual violence committed in armed conflict. Despite all of the legal instruments — which Mauritania has ratified — and despite the actions and initiatives taken by the international community on the protection and advancement of women, we must note that much remains to be done. Women remain victims of the abominable practice that is sexual violence.

We are against all forms of violence against innocent civilian populations, all the more so when it is women who are the victims. Islam, our holy religion, orders us to cherish and protect women, who are after all the mother, the sister, the wife, the daughter — in short, those who are the dearest to us in human society. Sexual violence against women exposes society as a whole to serious dangers: early and unwanted pregnancies for many women, HIV/AIDS infection for mother and child, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the total demoralization of women victims, negative social repercussions for victims, and so on.

Statistics show that in recent armed conflicts it is civilian populations, that is to say non-combatants, who represent the majority of the victims. Women, who are the main targets of sexual violence in these conflicts, along with children, account for the greatest number of victims.

In this face of this shameful phenomenon, the international community should take all necessary measures to put an end to it and adopt mechanisms where zero-tolerance is required for perpetrators of these abominable crimes against women, crimes which, moreover, are not limited to a single region of the world.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women has done remarkable work, but the persistence of rape of women in armed conflict has reached a level that requires a strengthening of the capacities of the Office of the Special Rapporteur, particularly in human resources; here, women should be the focus of the choices that are made. That is why my delegation believes that the proposal made by the Minister for Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of Belgium to appoint a woman special investigator on sexual violence is appropriate as an effective means for eradicating this practice.

Women must also play an active role in peacekeeping operations. Such participation is currently limited; this is especially linked to language issues. To work for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur as a military adviser, it is not enough to speak two official languages of the United Nations. This linguistic obstacle must be overcome to allow women who have the qualifications and who speak at least two United Nations languages to apply for a post in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations if they wish.

The President: The last speaker on my list is the representative of San Marino, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): I would like to thank the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, and you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting today.

Over the years, the Republic of San Marino has been a strong supporter of all campaigns against any type of violence against women. As President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, spearheaded the Council of Europe campaign against violence against women.

San Marino welcomes the now United Nations initiative on this subject initiated by the Secretary-General. In that context, we recently organized an event here at the United Nations, linking the work of the Council of Europe with the activities of this Organization.

I am happy to report that yesterday our parliament adopted a very comprehensive law against violence against women.

San Marino, a small country without an army, has been able to maintain its independence for more than 17 centuries. We condemn war and violence in general, but, more than anything else, we condemn violence against women and girls. Our women are the pillars of our society and of our families, and our families are the cornerstone of our society. Allowing violence against women destroys the very fabric of our society and all the dreams for our children's peaceful and prosperous future.

We are very proud to be among the sponsors of today's Security Council draft resolution on this very important matter.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it (S/2008/403). Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1820 (2008).

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.